

Iran and Iraq Perspectives In Conflict

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PERSPECTIVES IN CONFLICT

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#### PREFACE

I once heard a network news executive responding to a question concerning the lack of depth in television reporting. He said that the subjects most often complained about are so broad and complex as to defy in-depth reporting in the first place, but that more realistically it was not the network's intention to appeal to an audiences who was so naive as to think that the global situation could be adequately reviewed in 21 minutes each evening. That same type of realism warrants consideration in the introduction to this paper. The reader must keep in perspective the fact that I am not a learned scholar in Mideast affairs, but rather a military officer who chose this subject because I strongly feel it is something about which I, and others, know entirely too little. Three months or so of collatetal reading and writing does not pretend to fill such a large knowledge gap. It only underscores the accuracy of the

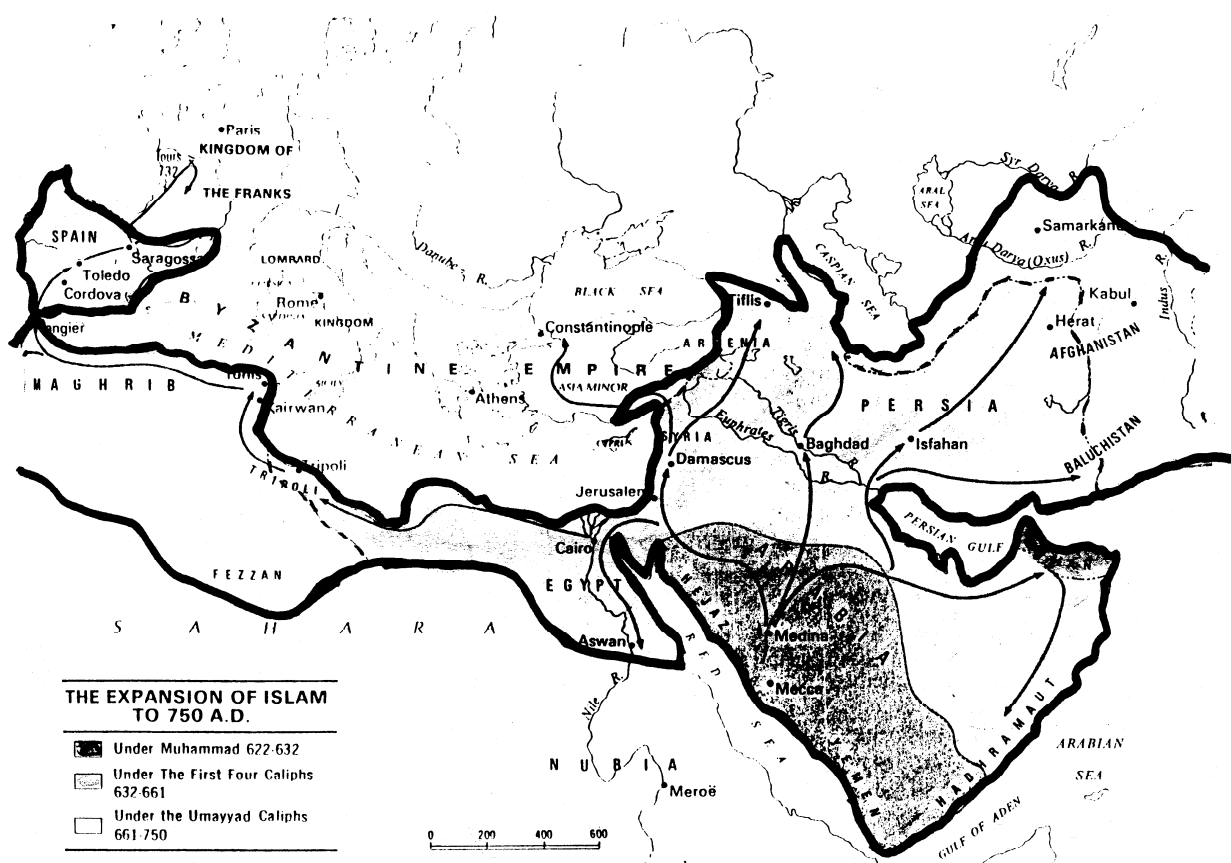
original premise.

The intention, therefore, is to take a walk-in-the-park approach to looking at the history of Iran and Iraq and, to some extent, the Mideast. After quickly reviewing the region's ancient heritage, the focus is on three areas: the rise and fall of Iran under the last shah; the rise of the now-ruling Baathist party in Iraq; and the Palestinian situation. Then, following a look at Khomeini and his ideology, a chronological review of the 1980's provides some quotations, historical reminders, and intrigue-filled allegations. Finally, discussion of some of the war's likely causes and a few broad lessons learned are presented for consideration. A conscious effort has been made to provide some insight into the perspectives of all concerned countries.

There are two additional introductory notes, the first being about the modern oil situation. According to the U. S. State Department, Persian/Arabian Gulf countries supply 25 per cent of all oil moving in world trade today, and they possess 65 per cent of the world's known petroleum reserves. Depending on the source, 30-60 per cent of western Europe's oil imports come from the gulf, as do 60-75 per cent of Japan's. While the comparable figure for the U. S. is only 15-20 per cent, a March 1987 Department of Energy security study shows that total U. S. imports could double by the mid - 1990's. As recent history has established, a disruption of even 5 per cent will drastically damage the free world economy. The Soviet bloc, on the other hand, is a net exported of oil.

Lastly, I must point out that the spelling of names and places as presented in this paper is not necessarily

authoritative, but rather what I've found most commonly used. Finally, the terms Persian and Iranian are used virtually interchangeably throughout, a practice I've also found common. As best I can determine, the Reza Shah officially changed the name of the country from Persia to Iran in 1934, but that to some, both have always been accepted. Iran by word origin is the same as Aryan, and Persians were just one of the ancient Indo-European Aryan tribes that settled in the region.



#### THE HISTORICAL LEGACY

The countries we now call Iran and Iraq share a legacy going back several millennia. Great civilizations - Assyrian,

Babylonian, Sumerian - flourished in this land of the Tigris and Euphrates. The Garden of Eden was here. Both people, the Arabs (Iraqis) and the Persians (Iranians), had vital roles in ancient Mideast culture, and both fell to Alexander the Great while escaping Roman rule. In the 7th century the entire region fell to Arabian conquerors alive with the new fervor of Islam. It is that period, the time of Muhammad, to which the origins of the present hostilities can be traced.<sup>1</sup>

#### MUHAMMAD AND HIS FAITH

The term Islam, meaning submission to God, is derived from the Muslim holy book, the Koran. The followers of Muhammad, the founder of the Islam religion, are called Muslims. The story of Islam begins in Arabia where nomads, or Bedouins, lived according to a tribal pattern. At the head of each tribe was a sheik, elected and advised by the heads of the related families comprising the tribe. Aside from their flocks, the Bedouins existence relied on booty from raids on caravans, settlements, or other tribes. They worshiped a large number of gods and spirits, many of whom were believed to inhabit trees, wells, and stones. One of the few cities in Arabia was Mecca, located on the major north-south caravan route. Mecca (now, with Riyadh, one of the capitals of Saudi Arabia) was a famous religious sanctuary to which many tribes made annual pilgrimages to worship at the temple. Known as the Kaaba (cube), this square temple contained a sacred black stone and the images of some 350 local deities and fetishes. <sup>2</sup>

Into this environment was born a man destined to transform completely the religious, political, and social organization of millions of people. Muhammad (570-632) was left an orphan early in life, worked in the caravan trade, and married his employer who was some fifteen years his senior. According to tradition, Muhammad frequently went into the foothills near Mecca to

meditate until, after a series of visions and revelations which began with a visit from the archangel Gabriel, he became certain that he was a divinely appointed prophet of Allah. Allah, The God - the same God worshiped by Jews and Christians - had chosen him to perfect the religion earlier revealed to Abraham, Moses, the Hebrew prophets, and Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

At first, perhaps understandably, Muhammad had little success in attracting followers. Citizens ridiculed his doctrine of resurrection, and were highly skeptical about forsaking their gods for a "mad poet," or accepting the concept that dying for one's faith assured entry into paradise. But by 630, large numbers of pilgrims had accepted the Prophet's teaching, and Muhammad marched on Mecca with an army. Victorious, and magnanimous toward his enemies, his first act was to cast out of the Kaaba its multitude of idols; the temple itself, however, together with the black stone, was preserved as the supreme center of Islam. In the two remaining years of Muhammad's life, tribe after tribe of Bedouins throughout Arabia offered him their loyalty. Upon his death in 632, the Prophet left behind a faith which had united Arabia and which would astound the world with its rapid expansion throughout Asia, Africa, and the Far East.

Muslims believe that the Koran contains the actual word of God as revealed to Muhammad over a period of more than twenty years. Because the Koran must never be used in translation for worship, the spread of Islam created extensive linguistic unity. Arabic supplanted many local languages, and that part of the Muslim world which stretches from Morocco to Iraq is still



Arabic-speaking. Further, this seventh-century book remains the last word on Muslim theology, law, and social institutions, and is therefore still the most important textbook in Muslim universities.

Within the Koran is the central tenet of Islam: monotheism; there is only one God, Allah. This is proclaimed five times daily from the minaret of the mosque as the faithful are called to prayer: "God is most great. I testify that there is no God but Allah. I testify that Muhammad is God's apostle. Come to prayer, come to security. God is most great." Belief in one God and in Muhammad as his Prophet is the first of five obligations, known to the Muslims as the Pillars of Faith; the others are prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and a pilgrimage to Mecca for those who can "afford" it. The Koran also provides Muslims with a body of ethical teachings; idolatry, infanticide, usury, gambling, the drinking of alcohol, and the eating of pork are all prohibited. Pervading Islam is the principle of religious equality. There are leaders of worship in the mosques and there is the ulema, a class of learned experts in the interpretation of the Koran, but there is no priesthood or clergy - no intermediary between man and God-only laymen.

#### CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

In 637 AD, an Arab Moslem army defeated the Persians and destroyed the existing Sassanian empire. Though the people of what is now Iran and Iraq converted almost totally to Islam, the Persians still viewed this defeat as "a great calamity" and

immediately sought to maintain their distinctive cultural identity.<sup>5</sup> At first, Islam was "modified" to create an individual Iranian version "not wedded to Bedouin customs and beliefs."<sup>6</sup> Later, in a comparable assertion of determination, the Persians played a significant role in the 750 AD defeat of the same Arab empire that had defeated them. In the 9th century, Arab and Iranian people went through a period called Shuubiya, in which they expressed their ill regard by calling each other names such as "lizard eater and fire worshiper."<sup>7</sup> During this period, Persians preached their superiority over Arabs and the equality in Islam of Arab and non-Arab Muslims. Likewise, Arabs viewed Persians as completely inferior. These historical factors, though probably of no political importance until the twentieth century, shaped the cultural perceptions which persist today between Arabs and Persians, between Iraq and Iran. Even the influence of Islam was not powerful enough to overcome their respective cultural differences.<sup>8</sup>

In 1492, the New World was "discovered." In 1501, with the rise of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, Old World history was altered: Shiism was proclaimed Iran's state religion.<sup>9</sup> The greatest Muslim schism is between Shiites and Sunni. In the earliest days of Islam, Shiites broke off in a dispute over rightful leadership over the Muslim community. While Sunnis accepted the best qualified man from Muhammad's tribe as caliph, Shiites insisted that the position be held only by one of Muhammad's direct descendants. Shiites, ruled and dominated by the Sunni, had historically been viewed as a sect with heretical

and extremist ideas.<sup>10</sup> Adoption of Shiism by the Safavids marked the true beginning of modern Persian nationalism by establishing publicly a distinctive cultural and political identity and even defining, to some extent, territorial boundaries.<sup>11</sup>

The Safavid kings viewed themselves as secular rulers and left religious leadership to the theologians. The Shiite clerics had land and money lavished upon them, gradually gained economic independence from the monarchy, and acquired a steady growth of influence in Persian politics. They have never been willing to give up the powerful and unique influence they gained under the Safavids.

#### THE ROOTS DEEPEN

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the Safavids and Shiism emerged in Persia, the Ottoman Turks had spent 250 years building their empire. They viewed Iraq, which did not come into existence as we know it until 1920, primarily as a buffer region protecting their heartland from Persian incursions.<sup>12</sup> But the Ottomans considered the rise of Shiism a political and ideological threat. Shiites had become more and more prevalent in Asia Minor over the years and the Ottomans feared that a revolt could split their empire. Mistrust was so great that 40,000 Shiites were massacred, and repressive measures against Shiites were instituted throughout the empire.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the Safavid dynasty conquered Iraq in 1510. They persecuted Sunni Muslims, destroyed Sunni shrines and built

new shrines to complement those existing that they already considered particularly Shiite. Their war goals were simple: (1) regional influence, (2) unrestricted access to Shiite shrines and safe passage to Mecca, and (3) security of the trade route from the Persian Gulf to Khanaqin (beginning with the Shatt-Al-Arab River).<sup>14</sup> The Ottomans eventually counterattacked, and for over 100 years the fighting was virtually continuous until, in 1639, the Treaty of Zuhab finally established Ottoman dominance. In so doing, however, it did little to prevent future conflict. While it did formally incorporate Iraq into the Ottoman empire and did contain a pledge from each not to interfere in the other's domestic affairs, it also created "a border so vague as to resemble a broad zone generally about a hundred miles wide where neither exercised much jurisdiction."<sup>15</sup> Even so, the treaty lasted for two centuries and was the foundation of all future accords.

During that ensuing 200 years, Persian-Ottoman relations were characterized by what might today be called low intensity conflict. Because of the ill-defined borders, numerous nomadic tribes were unsure of their allegiances. In the early 1820's, another war resulted in little more than reaffirmation of the Treaty of Zuhab; the borders remained vague, and each side agreed to the principle of non-interference. According to Article 1 of this First Treaty of Erzurum:

"The Two High Powers do not admit each other's interference in the internal affairs of their respective states. . ."  
but,  
"From this period on... no interference is to take place..."<sup>16</sup>

The treaty also assured Shiite pilgrims safe passage in Iraq and enroute Mecca.

Interference, of course, did take place, and twenty years later the Ottomans and Persians were again on the verge of war. The Persians had supported a rebellion in Northern Iraq of a nomadic Muslim people called the Kurds; the tribal Turks had begun to ignore borders in their movements; and the Ottomans had attacked the one Persian port on the Shatt-al-Arab River, Khorramshahr. There were new players on the scene now, though. Russian conquests just to the north in Caucasus and British domination over India gave the two powers a direct interest in Ottoman-Iranian affairs. Russia hoped to build a road from its territories to Baghdad and needed a clearly defined boundary to firm up negotiations; Britain wanted to settle disputes over the Shatt-al-Arab before setting up a steamship line there.

With little choice but to accept offers of mediation from England and Russia, the Ottomans and Iranians finally agreed to the Second Treaty of Erzurum in 1847. It had three key points: (1) Persia was granted sovereignty over the east bank of the Shatt-al-Arab, and the Ottomans sovereignty over the west bank; (2) Persia was granted freedom of navigation in the Shatt-al-Arab; (3) Persia pledged not to interfere in northern Iraq (the Kurds).<sup>17</sup> It also authorized a commission to determine the ground border. It did not, however, specifically discuss control over the river itself, only the banks. The river was under Ottoman control and the treaty assumed it would stay that way.<sup>18</sup>

The issue festered. Individual tribes still lived on both sides of the river and both the Ottomans and Persians would claim authority over them, for the purpose of military conscription for example. Khorramshahr, Iran's port on the Shatt-al-Arab, though at its intersection with the Karun River, made use of anchorages in the Shatt itself. The Ottomans insisted that this was their territory since it was beyond the east bank, and Ottoman customs agents thus had a free hand to meddle in Iranian affairs. In the north, efforts to survey the boundary were marked with a "spirit of chicane, dispute, and encroachment" which virtually prevented the establishment of an acceptable border.<sup>19</sup>

In 1908, the British discovered oil in Iran. With these new strains on Khorramshahr, Iran's conduit for all heavy machinery coming in and all oil going out, Ottoman intervention in Iran's escalating involvement in world trade became, probably for the first time, completely intolerable to a third country. In 1911, the Ottomans and Iranians met almost continuously in an effort to solve the boundary problem, but failed. The Russians and British again intervened, both recognizing that this issue had to be resolved so that their attentions could be properly focused on the growing menace in Germany. In 1913, representatives of the four countries agreed to the Constantinople Protocol. It specifically stated that the Shatt-al-Arab was the southern border and that its islands (except for three) and waters, except for the anchorages surrounding Khorramshahr, belonged to the Ottomans. For the first time, Iran had won rights in the Shatt itself.<sup>20</sup> But despite a great deal of hoopla over the diplomatic success by all concerned, the conflict was far from over. The Ottomans never ratified the Constantinople Protocol,

and in 1914 joined the German war effort.

#### THE NATION STATES

Just before the outbreak of the First World War, Arabs within the Ottoman empire had reached the breaking point in their relations with the Turks. In an Arab Congress in 1913, they denounced discriminatory treatment and demanded home rule and equality with Turkish citizens.<sup>21</sup> With the growing strategic importance of the Middle East, the British government followed the rise of Arab discontent with great interest. After the war started, extensive correspondence was carried out between the British high commissioner in Cairo and Sharif Husein, guardian of the Arab holy places. In the event of an Arab revolt, Britain would recognize Arab independence except in Palestine and "certain areas which might be claimed by France."<sup>22</sup> Britain's ambiguous alliance with the Arab nationalist movement was sufficient to woo the Arabs into a policy of benevolent neutrality, and to thwart a Turkish attempt to rouse the whole Muslim Middle East by preaching a jihad, or holy war, against the British.

In 1916, the Arab revolt began. Husein proclaimed independence from the Turks and captured Mecca for his cause. In the fighting that followed, the Arab forces were commanded by Husein's son, who was assisted by a now famous British officer, Colonel T.E. Lawrence, "Lawrence of Arabia." Under his command, the Arabs took a decisive part in the last battle against the

main Turkish forces in September 1918.

After the war, with Turkey defeated and the Ottoman empire destroyed, the Arab leaders sought the independence they thought Britain had promised and supported, but in vain. Syria and Lebanon were mandated to France; Iraq and Palestine to Great Britain. To the Arabs, the mandates were a poor substitute for independence, a flimsy disguise for imperialism, and ignorant of the intensity of Arab nationalism. In Iraq, Britain was quick to take steps to satisfy that prevailing nationalism, avoiding the intense conflict experienced by France in Syria and Lebanon. Though independence did not come until 1930, Iraq asserted her national rights early and went about the business of building the base of a modern economic life - roads, railways, oil pipelines - all of which converged on one river, the Shatt-al-Arab.

Iran, too, began to flourish under the strong leadership of Reza Shah Pahlavi and the "protection" of Great Britain. The oil business had grown to such a degree that a separate oil terminal was developed at Abadan, seven miles from Khorramshahr. Nationalistic and ambitious, the Reza Shah began to lure some Arab tribes in the region into acquiring Persian nationality, encouraging them to challenge their own new and disorganized government. While there is some question as to whether it was his influence, or simple fear of Iraqi military conscription that prevailed, the Iraqis were nevertheless incensed. Relations deteriorated, and manifested themselves in the border dispute.

Iraq, having inherited the Ottoman legacy as it pertained to treaties and agreements with Iran, sought to preserve the status quo, particularly in controlling the Shatt. To the Ottomans, this river had been a distant concern, but to the



Iraqis it was the national lifeline to the rest of the world.<sup>23</sup> Iran, on the other hand, became increasingly dissatisfied with previous agreements, viewing Iraq's control of this key river as a major affront to its economic security. With still only one viable port, Iran repudiated all previous agreements on the river rights and refused to recognize Iraq's independence. Though British mediation ultimately resulted in recognition of Iraq's right to exist, border negotiations remained stalled. Iran acquired a small navy and blatantly flouted Iraqi regulations; Iraq patrolled with increasing intensity.<sup>24</sup>

In 1934, Iraq took the matter to the League of Nations. The essence of the Iraqi claim was that Iran had flagrantly violated the 1913 Constantinople Protocol. Baghdad pointed out that in contrast to Iran, which had a 1200 mile coastline on the Persian Arab Gulf containing numerous serviceable harbors, Iraq had only one harbor, Basra, serviced by the Shatt-al-Arab. Further, they said, the Ottomans had not considered Iraqi national interest in ceding the entire surrounding area (Khuzistan), which is 80 percent Arab and had formerly been part of Iraq.<sup>25</sup> Turning the table, the Iranians responded that they had signed the treaty under duress, and more importantly, that the Ottomans had never ratified it! The Iranians referred to the most recent ratified treaty - The Second Treaty of Erzurum (1847) - and contended that it did not give control over the entire river to the Ottomans. Citing precedent, they further stated that unless explicitly asserted otherwise (which the 1847 treaty did not), river boundaries normally run along the center of the channel. <sup>26</sup> Iraq wanted control over the entire river; Iran wanted a border down

the middle. Those positions remain virtually unchanged into the late 1980's.

Soon after the League of Nations debates, a bloody coup d'etat in Iraq brought to power a new government eager to make peace with Iran. In 1937 a treaty was signed reaffirming the previous 300 years of treaties, with one notable exception: for five miles around Abadan - the growing facility that by this time handled most of Iran's oil - the boundary in the Shatt-al-Arab was at midchannel.

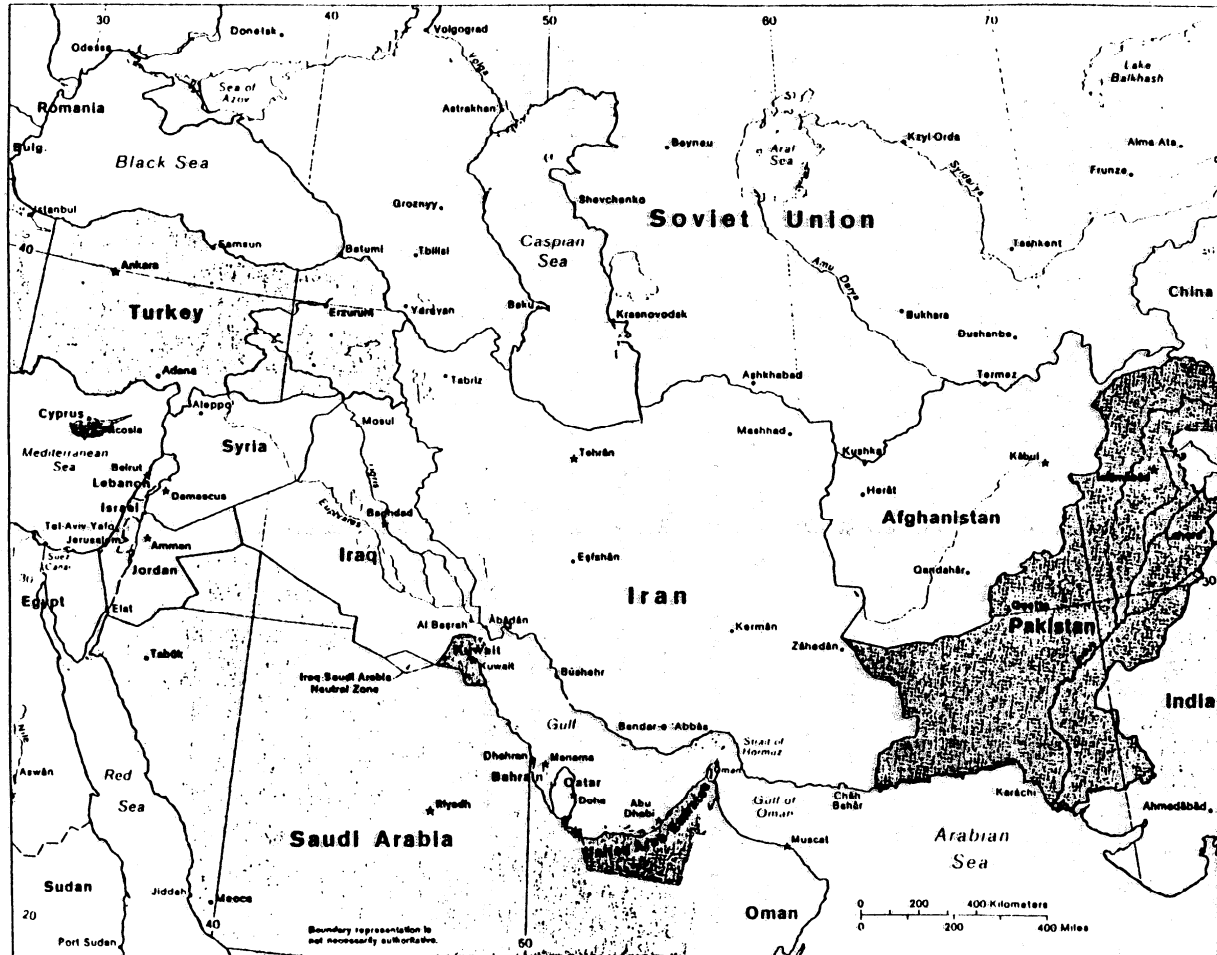
World War II again changed the complexion of things. The Allies occupied Iran sending the Reza Shah into exile, and both Iran and Iraq were used as staging areas for channelling arms, food, and supplies to Russia. The strategic location of both countries as a route for this aid led the British to expand the rail and road systems, and even build a bridge over the Shatt to facilitate matters. At one point an Iranian-Iraqi combined force was formed to counter German penetration into southern Russia.

Meanwhile the oil issue was assuming more importance. Since the British formed the Anglo-Persian oil company in 1908, Iran had been viewed as simply the country where oil had been discovered, whose government was little more than an ignorant shareholder who had to be humored from time to time.<sup>27</sup> The British operated the oil fields, managed the Abadan refinery, and controlled international marketing. The initial agreements established Iran's share in the profits, which were extremely small compared to today's, at about fifteen percent.<sup>28</sup>

The Iranians were disenchanted. Their country had been occupied, its new source of international revenue was not reaping

any real national rewards, and the issue of the border with Iraq remained unacceptable. The modern stage was set.

## Southwest Asia



2

THE SHAH OF IRAN

PUPPET OF THE ALLIES?

In the first few thousand years, the distinctive differences between Sunni and Shiite Muslims were established, Persia successfully asserted her cultural identity, and Persian-Arab ethnic animosity, to whatever extent it exists, became entrenched. A border dispute raged, even through Iraq's emergence from the Ottoman Empire as a new independent country; and oil was discovered. In Iran the Reza Shah successfully

established himself as an outright dictatorial nationalist convinced of the necessity to modernize his country, and was then destroyed by events larger than himself and his country.<sup>1</sup> The strategic location of Iran, as well as its oilfields, had become of major importance to Britain and Russia, both of whom were most antagonized with Reza Shah's pro-German sympathies at the outset of World War II. In 1941, a British ship took the Reza Shah into exile where he died three years later. His son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi became the Shah of Iran in 1944, at age 25.

#### THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The story of the shah is one of a highly complex character. Born a commoner with a twin sister seven years before the coronation of his father, he was a small and sickly child. This, coupled with the imposing nature of his father, apparently created a youth determined to test himself to the limit - a characteristic he continued to exhibit in his later love for flying.<sup>2</sup> He claims to have had visions which established his rule as one with a divine mission, offering as evidence his narrow escapes from at least one plane crash and five assassination attempts. He was the first Iranian ruler with a western Education (Switzerland), an experience he said opened his eyes to a wider world.<sup>3</sup> His admiration for and fascination with western society, culture, and technology did not, however, erase an undeniable attachment to the values and traditions of Iran. He regularly asserted that a regenerated Iran would soon take its place among the world's industrial powers in the Great Civilization, as he called it. What he did not assert is that democracy would have any place in this regenerated Iran, and he almost apologized for that:

"Believe me, when three-fourths of a nation does not know how to read or write, you can provide for reforms only by the strictest authoritarianism - otherwise you get nowhere."<sup>4</sup>

Under the shah, the country's schools, monuments, and national celebrations consistently commemorated 2500 years of monarchy, perpetuating the notion that the people of a nation play a purely passive role in decision making, and only participate once a governmental decision has been made.

At age 27, the shah experienced his first real national problem in what came to be called the Azerbaijan Crisis. At the end of the war, British and Russian troops pledged to withdraw from Iran by March 1946, but as the months passed the Russians stayed. Incorporating part of northern Iran, they set up two anti-monarchist, communist republics - Azerbaijan and the Kurdish Republic - and rebuffed Iranian military attempts to deal with the crisis. Fresh from the wartime alliance, the British - and now a new player, the Americans - did not confront Stalin, perhaps because they were genuinely waiting to get the full measure of Moscow's intentions. Though the matter was taken to the new United Nations Security Council, it was ultimately settled, virtually inexplicably, through direct negotiation by the Iranian prime minister, a suspected communist sympathizer. 5 The Soviets withdrew, and before the end of 1946 that portion of the two republics inside Iran collapsed.

Was this the Soviets' first move in the Cold War? Did Stalin simply see this as an opportunity to establish one sympathetic government on his long, unfriendly southern border? Was it an initial step in an attempt to acquire rights to a warm water port? Regardless, it failed, and reinforced in the shah a mistrust of the Soviet Union that had been nurtured by his father. December 12 became Azerbaijan Day and each year a

military parade commemorates it.<sup>6</sup> It would appear that the shah's first real crisis had landed him firmly in the anti-Soviet camp.

In the early 1950's, the shah was again tested. It was a time of deteriorating relations with Iraq primarily over the familiar border issues, and of rising Arab cultural consciousness. Arab tribes in Khuzistan, the section of southwest Iran (and southeast Iraq) bordering on the Shatt-al-Arab river, had appealed to the Iraqis for citizenship and the Iraqis called for a separate Arab state there. Though resolved amicably, this issue heightened Iranian suspicion of the Iraqis, and in 1950 all Iraqi subjects living in Iran were expelled.<sup>7</sup>

To complicate matters, the extent of the shah's power was in definite question within his own government and along his own people. The Iranian parliament, which viewed their country's government as a constitutional, not authoritarian monarchy, directly challenged the shah's authority in 1951 by making Mohammad Mossadegh prime minister. <sup>8</sup> Mossadegh, the country's most seasoned politician and 43 years older than the shah, had previously been denied governmental roles because of his blatant contempt for the Pahlavi dynasty. But capitalizing on a rising tide of Iranian nationalism, he appealed to a popular trend-hatred of foreign intervention and dominance - and made nationalization of Iranian oilfields a precondition to his accepting office. Within a few months, however, it became clear to western observers that though he had won the people by embracing a popular concept, he was ill-equipped to attain his nationalistic goals. Perhaps obsessed with undermining the

shah's authority, Mossadegh had not even considered the complexities of running the oilfields. Without British expertise, they ceased to function - a situation which quickly became intolerable to the British and Americans.<sup>9</sup>

While there may have been differing perceptions as to what should be done in the region, particularly with regard to British dominance and the philosophical wrongness of countering a move toward nationalization, both the U.S. and Britain agreed that the threat of communist exploitation, still somewhat new but increasingly emotional, was the prevalent consideration; and that threat demanded action.<sup>10</sup> The U.S. withheld aid and denied loans at a time when oil revenue in Iran had ceased. The British, though at one point having paratroopers on standby in Cyprus, ultimately decided that the overthrow of Mossadegh through subversive means was preferable to direct military intervention.<sup>11</sup>

On August 16, 1953, the shah made a half-hearted attempt to overthrow Mossadegh, failed, and was promptly forced to leave the country. The next day the statues of the shah in Teheran were torn down. But extraordinarily, only two days later, with a combination of support from loyal Iranian troops, paid mobs recruited in the bazaar, and outside support in the form of the young CIA, the shah's followers reestablished control.<sup>12</sup> The Iranian people had become disenchanted with the failed nationalization effort and the flight of the shah added further confusion and doubt. It was on this national mood that subversive efforts, primarily orchestrated by the CIA,

capitalized.<sup>13</sup> Mossadegh was overthrown and the shah returned from exile to a tremendous and probably staged hero's welcome. Interestingly, he chose to disregard the U.S. and British role and portrayed Mossadegh's overthrow as a spontaneous expression of pro-shah loyalty.<sup>14</sup> Further, he blamed the entire situation on the communists:

"Communism seeks to exploit not only the political, economic and social weakness of the emerging lands, but also their military vulnerability. If a country fails to secure its defenses, the communists play with it as a cat does a mouse. During the Azerbaijan crisis, and again in Mossadegh's time, we Persians found ourselves in the unhappy role of the mouse. We resolved never again to be so unprotected."<sup>15</sup>

Most historians agree that it is from this point on that the shah became obsessed with Iran's security and destiny. What is in question is who controlled the special relationship between the shah and the United States that grew out of the Mossadegh incident. A prevalent view of U.S.-Iranian relations during the shah's reign is one of Iran as a dutiful pro-western ally. Indeed, his fall is often blamed on the perception that the U.S. controlled his actions and dictated policy from Washington - that he was a tool of imperialism. But if the shah is to be taken at his word, even part of the time, and if his relationship with the U.S. is viewed within the context of his obsession with Iran's security and global destiny, there is some question as to who was in control of whom.

#### THE GREAT CIVILIZATION

At an early stage, the shah realized that the United States did not give much credence to his assertions that Iran was



especially strategically important to preventing the spread of communism and fostering harmony in the Mideast. In immediate post-war U.S. assistance programs, for example, Iran was lumped in with the Philippines and Korea to share a total of \$27 million; Turkey and Greece, by comparison, were to receive more than \$211 million.<sup>16</sup> To establish the importance of Iran to the United States, the shah personally took every opportunity to stress the instability of Iran in relation to external threat. He courted Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy with flowery letters which encouraged them to understand Iran's key position in the region, stressing that regional conflicts were not a thing of the past, and that it was Iran who, with the proper forces, could deter aggression. He reminded them of Iran's role as "oil supplier to the West and key to Asia and Africa in the near future."<sup>17</sup>

The shah's assessment of the U.S. perception of Iran was correct. Though dependency on Mideast oil was rising, it had not become a major issue; and while Iran was considered important in the sense that they were anti-communist, other global issues were more pressing in Washington's view. As a result, and to the shah's satisfaction, it was initially easier for the American government to acquiesce than to remain continuously in detailed negotiation over numerous Iranian proposals. Until 1958, the shah successfully pressed his defense buildup through weak complaints from U. S. analysts that his "appetite for soldiers and military hardware was unrealistically unlimited."<sup>19</sup> Three years earlier, through U. S. promotion of the philosophy of collective regional security agreements as a bulwark against communism, the Baghdad Pact had united Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan,

Iran, and the United Kingdom. Though the U. S. promoted the pact, Washington maintained a less binding associate membership and thenceforth, Iran claimed that the United States had lured her into abandoning her traditional neutrality with promises of increased military assistance that was not forthcoming

By 1958, when a group of "radical" army officers overthrew the government in Iraq, it had become clear that while regional security under the protective umbrella of Britain and the United States was desirable, there was primacy to ulterior motives. As was reported by the U. S. Ambassador to Iran in 1959:

"The Baghdad Pact has meant nothing to the people and government of Iran other than the strong hope of massive aid and/or territorial guarantees from the U.S. in return for Iranian adherence to the Pact."20

When the Iraqi government toppled and American offered herself as regional protector, the shah balked, expressing his belief in the necessity for a firmer U. S. commitment. In his view, that commitment should include the necessary assistance to add five new divisions to the twelve he already had, a significant delivery of F-100 aircraft even though the Iranian Air Force had trouble maintaining their F-84's, and the availability of a relatively large number of NIKE and HONEST JOHN missiles.21 The U. S. did not agree, and the shah turned to the Soviets.

In what Secretary of State Dulles called blackmail, the shah (at age 39) for the first time demonstrated an element of international fearlessness in his blatant manipulation of the international fearlessness in his blatant manipulation of the superpowers. It was an era of bloc-building, of deepening Cold War, and the shah knew very well that the United States could not

diplomatically tolerate the loss of Iran as an ally. He knew that even "going neutral" would have an equally devastating effect.<sup>22</sup> While he courted the Russians only long enough to achieve the desired American reaction, he did prevail. His actions - which give credence to the notion that a nation has no permanent friends, only permanent interests - left no further doubt as to his obsession with building Iran into a modern force in the Great Civilization. A subsequent Central Intelligence Agency report identified the principal U. S. problem with Iran as being "how to give the shah sufficient support to preserve his pro-western policy without encouraging excessive demands for aid," and went on to warn that if the shah were "convinced that the U. S. was withdrawing or significantly reducing its support for him, the chances of his working out an agreement with the USSR would be much greater."<sup>23</sup>

That CIA assessment prevailed over the years, as did the shah's use of coercive diplomacy, particularly the threat of collaboration with the Soviets, as a lever to force the U. S. hand. In some areas of mutual economic interest, relationships with the Soviets were indeed established, and in a statement to Parliament in the late 1960's, the shah made it clear that he took orders from no one. He stated that his continuing efforts to build up Iranian defenses were purely associated with Iran's best interest (presumably as opposed to being polluted with external intervention), and that if military equipment did not come from the U. S., he would seek it from the Soviets.<sup>24</sup>

By the time President Nixon was elected in 1968, the shah had become a symbol in the Mideast of a permanency and power that

was not only rare among developing states, but increasingly rare among all U.S. allies. This position was enhanced by the British announcement that same year of their intent to terminate their military presence in the Gulf. The shah immediately promoted Iran as the new power to fill the vacuum. On November 30, 1971, just one day before completion of the British pullout, the shah sent forces to occupy three islands in the Strait of Hormuz. Abu Masa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, belonged to the United Arab Emirates until this decision by the shah that control of these islands was essential for him to accomplish his new role as policeman in the Gulf. The Arab states protested, but took no action. By 1972, perhaps at least partly because of the Vietnam situation, the U. S. had "ceased any attempts to influence the shah's plans and ambitions for a 'Great Iranian Civilization' founded on a physically secure state underwritten by large amounts of sophisticated military hardware."<sup>25</sup> President Nixon and Henry Kissinger accepted a National Security Council Study which concluded that Iran, together with Saudi Arabia in a more minor military role, should be fully supported in its desire to fill the vacuum left by the British.<sup>26</sup> This "twin pillars" policy, as it came to be called, was a regional balance of power concept designed to prevent Soviet intervention in the area without need for U. S. involvement. As far as weapon purchases were concerned, Iran was virtually given carte blanche.

BOOM; TIGHTEN YOUR BELTS

"We are only pricing the minimum it (oil) could be priced in comparison with other sources of energy .

Well, some people are going to say this is going to create chaos in the industrialized world; that it is going to be a heavy burden on the poor countries. . . That is true; but as to the industrialized world, they will have to tighten their belts, and they will have to work harder or eventually (their ability to help the poor) will be diminished, and this role taken up - in my opinion by the new wealth of the oil countries. Eventually all those children of well-to-do families who have plenty to eat at every meal, who have their own cars. . . will have to rethink these privileges of the advanced world."<sup>27</sup>

It was at a press conference on December 23, 1973, when, with the confidence of a man who knew that his country's income and access to weapons had become inconceivably immense, the Shah of Iran announced a staggering new increase in the price of oil. In Kuwait two months earlier, with Arab-Israeli fighting at a height, OPEC had already announced a 70 per cent increase. This early exercising of the "oil weapon" included production cut backs as a means to put pressure on the west, and embargoes on exports to the United States and the Netherlands for their particularly distasteful pro-Israeli stance. The result was a desperate international scramble to purchase oil at any price. <sup>28</sup> In Iran, just before the shah's December announcement, oil was selling at frantic fuctions for over \$17 per barrel. This was over three times higher than the increased price which OPEC had set at Kuwait two months earlier. So when the shah announced the price at \$11.65 per barrel, it almost looked as though OPEC were doing the world a favor.<sup>29</sup>

With oil revenues which had increased from \$5 billion to \$19 billion in just a few years, Iran was the second largest OPEC producer after Saudi Arabia. But unlike the Saudi King, the shah did not participate in the oil embargo or production. cut

backs. While the Saudis appeared to be holding the world ransom, the shah attempted to emerge as a more responsible international thinker. He asserted his belief that oil was simply not a proper political weapon, and further emphasized that Iran, with a population greater than all the other oil producers combined and an oil-dominated economy, could not sacrifice her national interests nor weaken her role as the most viable regional bastion against communism.<sup>30</sup> But to all Arabs, the shah's actions reflected his support for Israel; to some, they reflected his pro-imperialist stance. Notwithstanding his assertions, it was well-known that he did not harbor Arab ill-will toward Israel, and in fact, considered Israel another key anti-communist bastion.<sup>31</sup>

Resulting, Arab uneasiness was compounded when, after several years of skirmishes and diplomatic efforts with Iraq concerning the Shatt-al-Arab River had failed, the shah finally simply stated that he no longer considered previous treaties valid, and that the new border was the center of the channel. To support the strength of his claim, he provided massive support to the Kurds who were again rebelling in northeast Iraq. In retaliation, the Iraqis expelled some 70000 Iranians, primarily Shiites; but weakened by the Israeli conflict, suffering from internal disorder, and not supported against Iran's power and authority by other Arab states, Iraq was forced to capitulate.<sup>32</sup> In 1975, the Algiers Agreement accommodated the shah's border claim. In return, the shah ceased support for the Kurdish rebellion which promptly collapsed.

The shah's vision of Iran as a great power in a Great Civilization appeared achievable. His country's income was

immense and he had become the dominant gulf power. He was courted by the world's leaders, and international businessmen were reduced to sleeping in hotel lobbies in hopes of just a short audience. He gave lavish parties at his embassy in Washington, where he courted American leaders and media. By 1978, however, the world realized that the shah had overspent--an almost unimaginable \$12 billion in arms expenditures to the U.S.<sup>33</sup> His internal modernization programs, which included low-level free education, a relatively futuristic superhighway and communication system, and an over-ambitious concept of land reform, had failed. Even the shah eventually realized and accepted that his program for Iranian growth was based on the fundamental inability to impose the values and lifestyle of an alien, modern, industrialized world upon a traditional culture. His obsession with defense, in the form of an entirely out-of-proportion military strength, deprived his people of their true needs, and therefore ultimately, himself of their support.

During his tenure, the shah systematically eliminated all internal sources of even remotely viable opposition, a course of action not uncommon in "third world" governments. One fiery Shiite theologian, however, an ayatollah (a special title accorded only to the most respected few), had consistently opposed the shah's reforms as heretically against Islam. In 1963, when the shah had this theologian arrested during the holiest time of the Shiite year, there were three days of major riots in Iran which, militarily suppressed, resulted in perhaps over 1000 killed or seriously wounded.<sup>34</sup> But even from exile,

the Ayatollah Khomeini retained a large following, primarily among the urban poor who were suspicious of the shah's modernization plans and bitter because they saw no real benefit from the country's oil wealth.

### 3

#### THE PAN-ARAB SOLUTION

Iraq, ancient Mesopotamia, plagued by violent political upheaval and internal instability for centuries, is a country with a society fragmented to a degree probably incomprehensible to the average westerner.<sup>1</sup> With oil such a prevalent modern issue, it is easy to forget that unlike other "gulf" states, Iraq's governmental and domestic focus has historically been, even into the 1950's, on the agricultural richness of the Fertile Crescent area. While the port of Basra was unquestionably important as a major trading center, the southeast region did not, until modern times, have dominant impact on Iraq's overall policies.

The Ottomans left behind a stagnant economy, deep-seated Sunni-Shiite cleavages, and more importantly, no unifying political institutions or viable central administration. The Hashemite monarchy, installed after World War I, faced British control, Kurdish rebellion, and rising Arab nationalism in their attempts to lead a country with sectarian, ethnic, tribal, and religious difficulties. They had no long-standing political ties as a nation, and faced growing internal impatience with the slowness of reform.

#### THE BAATHIST RISE

Founded in 1940 by Syrian intellectual Michel Aflaq, the Baath party emerged from World War II as the first political party to fully espouse pan-Arabism. Young, educated idealists seeking a new order advocated the view that "regional boundaries were artificial and would disappear with the awakening of Arab consciousness."<sup>2</sup> Theoretically, their nationalism concept was of an Arab Nation open to all Arabs regardless of religion, sect, or ethnic origin. Its goals - unity, freedom, and socialism - reflected a belief that global power struggles had imposed an imperialist order in which weaker nations had been exploited and



divided. As reflected in the Baath Constitution of 1947, only unified resurgence could break that pattern:

"The Party is revolutionary, believing that its principal aims - resurrecting Arab nationalism and building socialism - cannot be realized except by revolution and struggle. And that reliance on slow evolution and contentment with partial reform threaten these aims with failure and extinction. Therefore the Party resolves upon (1) the struggle against foreign imperialism for the complete and absolute liberation of the (Arab) homeland; (2) the struggle to bring together all Arabs in a single state; (3) the overthrow of the existing corrupt order by a revolution that shall embrace all aspects of life-intellectual economic, social, and political."<sup>3</sup>

Drafted in 1947, the constitution contains no specific mention of the Palestinian cause. At that time, the entire Arab world was divided and under foreign domination of one kind or the other, so the issue of liberation was pervasive.

Baathist views began to reach Iraq in the late 1940's, particularly among students and intellectuals. By the mid-50's, the party's influence was well-enough entrenched that a regional branch was founded. That branch quickly established Iraq as the leader among Arabs in portraying the Israel/Palestine situation as the ultimate symbol of both Arab disunity and the aims of imperialism. In 1958, the general dissatisfaction of the people with the way the country was being ruled resulted in a bloody coup. The Hashemite dynasty, considered extremely pro-west, was crushed; the Palestine question was embraced as crucial to the Arab struggle; and on the surface, it appeared that the Baathists had succeeded in advancing their concept of nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

In the ensuing ten years, however, continued internal instability, violent power struggles, and economic mayhem were

rampant. Rivalries between the Kurdish party, the communist party, and the Baathists resulted in at least ten coups d'etat or attempts, and even led to a double coup in 1963. Border disputes continued, and oil became an obviously prominent factor in the future of Iraq as a nation. Finally, the devastating 1967 defeat at the hands of the Israelis convinced the Baathists of the absolute necessity to implement the goals they heretofore had failed to achieve. On July 17, 1968, they took power in a bloodless coup and have remained there ever since.

In the words of now President Saddam Hussein, the Baathists were determined to make Iraq a "model state" and a leader of the Arab world.<sup>5</sup> In foreign policy, they were concerned primarily with ending foreign control over Arab homeland, particularly in Palestine, but also in Iran's southwestern Khuzistan province which is inhabited mainly by Arabs and which the Iraqis refer to as Arabistan. They advocated non-alignment in the Cold War, stressing (not unlike the shah in theory) that international negotiations would be conducted with whomever necessary to further the interests of the Arab state. Internally, the new leaders established four main objectives: (1) consolidation of authority; (2) economic independence through oil nationalization; (3) broadening the popular base; and (4) resolving the Kurdish problem.<sup>6</sup> In a country where governmental power is often obtained and retained through violent struggle and brutality, and the state (people) is a tool for the implementation of party (government) objectives, even the first of these goals is burdensome. To complicate matters were border disputes with Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Israel situation, oil disagreements with Syria, and the unwelcome dominance of the

ever-present shah.

On a higher plane, the Baathist ideology, which advocated altering the prevailing configuration of power and making radical social and economic changes, did not particularly appeal to Iraq's more conservative neighbors. They listened skeptically as the Baathists attempted to convince them that the fragmentation of the Arab world, the humiliation of the Arab defeats at the hands of the Israelis, and the championing by the west of Iran's overlord role in the Gulf, were deliberate attempts by western imperialism, zionism, and their regional allies to divide the Arabs and to continue to exploit their oil wealth.<sup>7</sup> In 1970, apparently feeling isolated and encircled by non-supportive regimes, Iraq's government turned to the Soviets, who welcomed them with open arms, and executed a fifteen year treaty of friendship.<sup>8</sup> This move, coupled with an ill-conceived Iraqi attempts to annex Kuwait, served only to heighten Gulf state suspicions as to the regime's aspirations and intentions.

In 1974, however, Iraq's diplomatic situation began to improve. The Saudis had become increasingly concerned about Iran's role in the Gulf, and were also interested in reducing Iraq's growing reliance on the Soviet Union. The two countries resolved their border disputes and reopened diplomatic relations in 1975. In 1978 they moved even closer together, mostly because of their common opposition to the Camp David accords. Iraq had taken the lead in, achieving a somewhat historic unified Arab position in favor of the Palestinian cause, a resolution which quickly led to the ouster of Egypt from the League of Arab Nations. Relations were even improved with Kuwait.<sup>9</sup>

## THE BUILD-UP

While Iraqi relations with other Arab states showed potential for improvement, the situation with Iran was quite different. There can be no question that the shah viewed with extreme disdain this socialist and Arab nationalist regime, backed by the communists, which vehemently advocated preservation of "Gulf Arabism" and adamantly opposed Iran's role in the gulf. Comparably, Iraq continued to view Iran as a third party to the coalition between imperialism and zionism which was bent on fragmenting the "Arab homeland." As examples, the Iraqis pointed to the shah's border claims and cited the Kurdish rebellion as fully backed by Iran, Israel, and the U.S.<sup>10</sup> That rebellion brought Iran and Iraq to the brink of war in 1975 when hostilities escalated to the point that the shelling of oil fields, a reaction neither country desired, was the next likely step. The seriousness of the situation, unquestionably compounded by growing regional concern over the shah's dominance and power, led to the Algiers Agreement after mediation efforts by Jordan's King Hussein, Egypt's President Sadat, and Algeria's President Boumadienne. It could be said, as noted earlier, that both sides netted gains: for Iraq, Iranian support of the Kurds would cease; for Iran, after hundreds of years of dispute, the boundary line (border) in the Shatt-al-Arab river would be the middle of the channel, as the shah had demanded. Notably, both sides avoided any disruption of oil production and established a unified front within OPEC calling for higher prices.

Following the Algiers Agreement, Iraq followed a

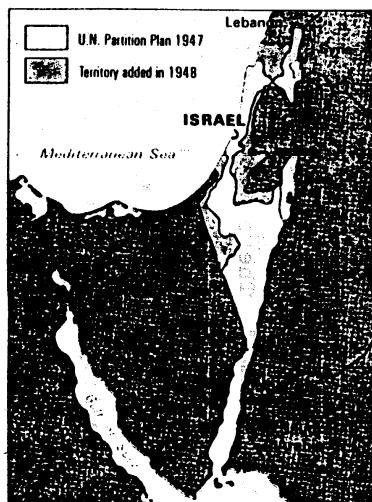
diplomatically friendly, if cautious course toward Iran. In 1976 Saddam Hussein declared that "Iranian-Iraqi rapprochement has permitted discussions for establishing a collective Gulf security agreement," but that the spirit of the accord is such that Iran "must respect the national sovereignty of all Arab countries." Even immediately after the ouster of the shah, Iraqi leaders continued to express hope for cooperation with Iran. They welcomed Khomeini's anti-US sentiments, and the declaration that Iran would no longer play the role of Gulf policeman, as positive steps "toward the establishment of cordial relations with the Arab Gulf states."<sup>12</sup> Saddam Hussein said:

" . . . we are keen on cooperation with Iran in a way that will ensure the interests and security of the people in the area . . . Any system which does not side with our enemy, respects our independence and whose oil policy is consistent with the interest of our two people will certainly command our respect and appreciation." <sup>13</sup>

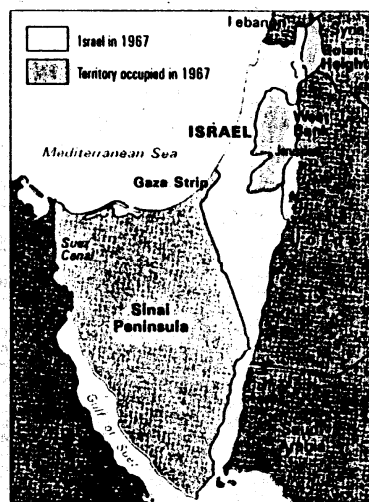
Better relations were, perhaps, prematurely doomed in the spring of 1978 when Iraq expelled Ayatollah Khomeini after he began to escalate his activities against the regime of the shah. Wanting to avoid reopening the conflict with Iran at a time when it was by no means certain that the shah's regime was about to collapse, Iraq responded to Iranian requests and asked Khomeini to cease his activities or leave the country. Denouncing the Iraqi position as against the Islamic revolution, Khomeini departed vowing that all opponents to Islam would be punished.<sup>14</sup>

Relations deteriorated rapidly until in March 1980, Iran unilaterally downgraded its diplomatic ties to the charge d'affaires level, withdrew its ambassador, and demanded that Iraq do the same. The tension increased in April following the

attempted assassination of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and, three days later, the bombing of a funeral procession being held to bury students who had died in an earlier attack. Iraq blamed Iran, and in September, attacked.



**In the 1948 War, Israel gained much territory in addition to the area that had been given to it by the United Nations (UN) Partition Plan of 1947.**



**The 1967 War resulted in Israel's occupation of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, Jordan's West Bank, and Syria's Golan Heights.**



**Israel Withdrew from the Sinai in three stages. It pulled back from parts of the peninsula in 1975 and 1979 and completed its withdrawal in 1982.**

WORLD BOOK maps

#### THE PALESTINE DILEMMA

"Iraq's main campaign is against the Zionist enemy (Israel), and not against Iran."

- Saddam Hussien 1980 Press Conference, about one week after the war began.<sup>1</sup>

The dispute between Arabs and Israelis is "cultural and historic and will continue for many years.

- Saddam Hussein, 1982 Press Conference<sup>2</sup>

"Iraq cannot attempt to persuade the PLO to recognize (United Nations) resolutions 242 and 338, since Iraq itself does not recognize them"

- Ta Yassin Ramdan, Iraqi Deputy Premier, Christmas 1985 <sup>3</sup>

Even now, as the Palestinian issue boils, Iraqi newspapers still echo the cause, offering the people hope that with an end

to the war with Iran, Iraq could return its attention to its historical struggle with Zionism.<sup>4</sup> There is little question that the Palestinian cause is a symbol of everything the very foundations or Baathist ideology oppose. The government of Iraq has responded in foreign policy to other nations according to their position on this issue and is, in a sense, duty bound to lead the Arab world to right the injustices done to the Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims by, in their view, an imperialist-backed Zionist movement. Indeed, for most Arab states, identification with the Palestinian cause has played a significant role in boosting the regime's prestige and enhancing its regional legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> Even in the broadest of terms, the forcible insertion of a Zionist state into their heartland may be no more acceptable to Arabs than having Cuba where South Carolina is would be to Americans.

On the other hand, to use an otherwise-applied President Reaganism, it also appears clear that many Arab states have begun to realize that realistically, they must live in the world as it is rather than as they wish it were. Key Arab regimes have provided money, arms, and diplomatic championing to support the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO, now recognized by most Arab states and the United Nations, but not the U.S., as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people); but, particularly in recent years, there has been a sizable gap between cash-backed rhetoric and real action. In 1982, the Arabs were surprisingly passive in the face of Israel's campaign into Lebanon to crush the PLO. In 1988, there is still inadequate unified Arab resolve to threaten Israel's military might. It may

be that Egypt through the 1979 Camp David accords, and even informally and secretly Syria and Jordan (the front-line states), all of whom have lost territory to Israel at some time or another in the past 30 years, have paved the way for broader Arab acceptance of the realization that enhancement of internal stability and national economic development, are more important and more realistic undertakings than an elusive quest for pan-Arab unity or the liberation of "historic" Palestine. Militarily too weak on their own, embroiled in intergovernmental rivalries, facing vast domestic problems, and naturally unwilling to give up their own government to an untested pan-Arab concept, many Arab states may understandably be bound not totally by the Palestinian cause, but by the dilemma of how to reconcile their ideological commitments with the more sober realities of the world as it is. For Iraq, this presents an especially difficult problem, because to accept Israel is to profoundly alter the ruling party's historic concept of Arab existence.

So what is the role of ideology and what is at the core of this apparent Arab support on one hand and ambivalence on the other? How would it affect Iraq's government, and the war with Iran, if the "embodiment of the Baathist cause" were rejected? Is there an acceptable, long-term solution short of the dissolution of Israel, or Iraq? What really determines the Arab-Israeli conflict, and is it a problem than can be viably "solved" or simply something the world must find a way with which to live. These are a few of the questions that truly learned Mideast scholars and highly experienced officials in international relations ponder and debate, as yet without resolution. However an historical review can provide some perspective.



## THE RETURN OF THE JEWS

On November 29, 1947, in the wake of unconscionable Nazi persecution, the newly formed United Nations voted to end British control of Palestine and create for the Jews the state of Israel in the land of their ancient forefathers. The Jews agreed; the Arabs did not.

Before that, the last Jewish state was Judaea. Overthrown by the Roman emperor Titus in 70 A.D., the Jews of Judaea repeatedly rebelled against their Roman overlords until 135 A.D., when Jerusalem was burned to the ground and the remaining Jews were either killed or expelled from their homeland. For almost 2000 years, during which the Jews were scattered throughout the world (which they call the "Diaspora," or Dispersion), the hope of an eventual return to the homeland of their ancestors was kept alive from generation to generation. During that time, the land of Palestine was under the successive rule of Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Turks, and British. However, for the most recent thirteen centuries, the overwhelming majority of the population was Arab and Muslim.

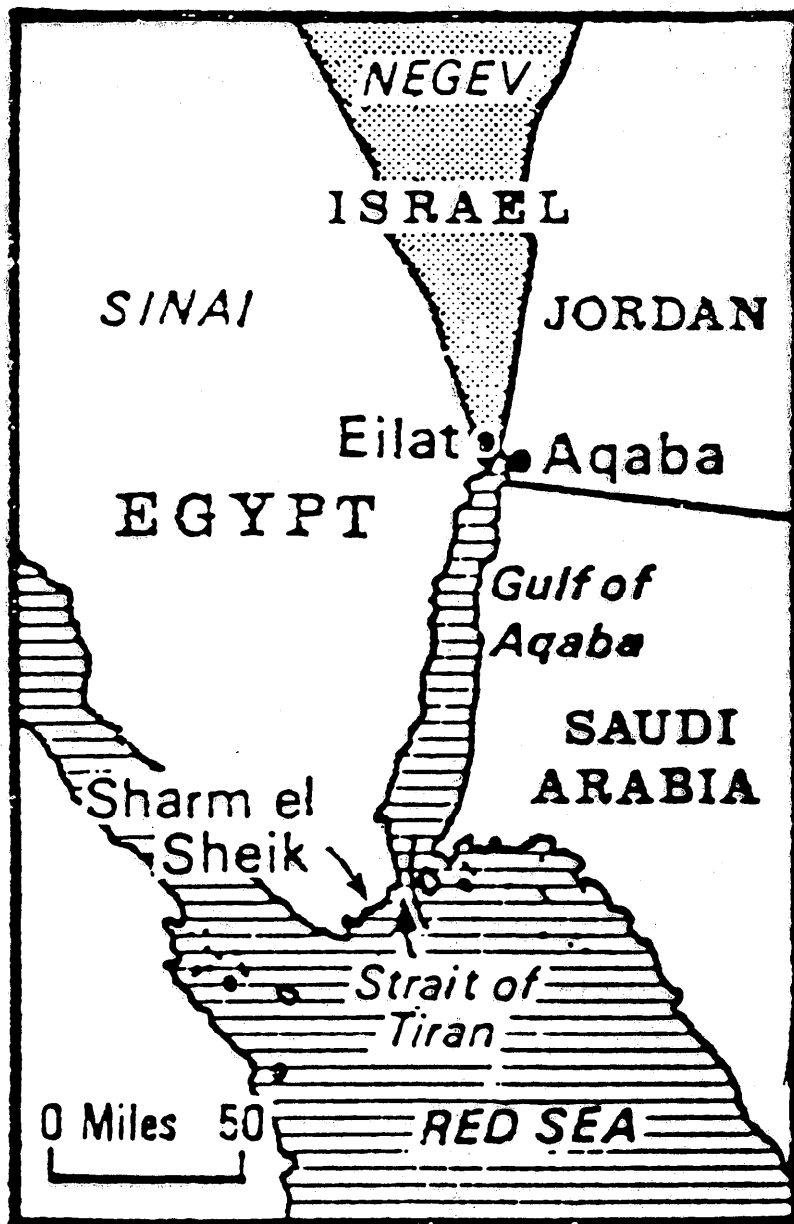
Though a few pious Jews always lived in Palestine for religious reasons, it was not until the 1880's, largely in reaction to growing European anti-Semitism, that Jews from all over the world began to "return." In 1897, the Zionist Party was formed by Dr. Theodore Herzl with the aim of "establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine."<sup>6</sup> By 1914, the Jewish population in Palestine had risen from 25000 to 80000, and shortly thereafter, the British

government issued the Balfour Declaration in sympathy with Jewish-Zionist nationalistic aspirations. It promised support for the "establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people . . . it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."7 The Arabs objected then, but the Arab-Israeli situation did not truly begin to manifest itself until the late 1930's when Nazi persecution resulted in mass immigration. By the end of the war, the Jewish population in Palestine had reached 600,000, about half the total, and civil strife between Arabs and Jews was common.8 Severely weakened by the war and unable to maintain order, Britain pulled out, and turned the situation over to the U.N.

The U.N. solution was to partition Palestine into a Jewish and Arab national state, with Jerusalem and Bethlehem under international administration. Within a few days after the announcement of this plan, violent Jewish-Arab clashes erupted in Jerusalem and other parts of the country. On May 14, 1948, Israel was declared independent; on May 15th, it was invaded by the armies of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Though greatly outnumbered and poorly armed, and hindered by the newness of their state, the Israelis prevailed, occupying about half the land the U.N. had planned for the new Arab state. The other half was divided between Jordan and Egypt. Israel occupied the western half of Jerusalem and declared it her capital; Jordan controlled the eastern half which included the main religious sites important to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In the aftermath, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled their homes in the areas newly occupied by the

Israelis. Despite the U.N. tailored armistice, the Arabs continued to consider themselves in a state of war with Israel and refused to recognize its existence as a nation. The Palestinian refugees were the most visible and most immediate cause of bitterness.



THE SINAI CAMPAIGN

Egypt, led by pro-Soviet President Nasser, was the first to take up the cause.\* In the early 1950's, economic sanctions were imposed by denying Israel use of the Suez Canal and restricting its ability to use the Gulf of Aqaba. Beginning in 1955, frequent raids were conducted by Egyptian trained saboteurs (fedayeen) who entered Israel from the Gaza Strip and through Jordan.<sup>10</sup> Israel retaliated in kind. In the summer of 1956, Nasser seized the Suez from its British and French owners<sup>11</sup>; on October 29th, in a move allegedly designed to destroy fedayeen bases, Israel invaded the Sinai peninsula. Two days later, after Nasser ignored an ultimatum to open the canal to foreign shipping, France and Britain joined the attack. Within ten days, the Gaza Strip and almost the entire Sinai peninsula were under Israeli control. The U.N. again intervened, voting for the establishment of a United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) to "secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities,"<sup>12</sup> Although the intervention was successful in the sense that Israel

\* On May 25, 1950, the U.S., British, and French governments issued a joint declaration on the maintenance of peace and stability in the Arab states and Israel, opposing the development of an arms race in the Middle East and stating their "inalterable opposition" to the use of force.

eventually withdrew to pre-war boundaries and the Suez Canal was reopened, hostilities between the Arabs and Israelis were far from over.

During the ensuing ten years, Israel was involved in armed clashes with Egypt on the Gaza Strip, Jordan on the West Bank (Jordanian territory west of the Jordan river including Jordan's half of Jerusalem), and Syria in the Golan Heights. All insisted

that a state of war with Israel continued to exist. The Palestinian refugee problem festered.

#### THE SIX DAY WAR

The third Arab-Israeli war broke out on June 5, 1967. During the preceding two years, Arab terrorists apparently based in Syria had conducted an increasing number of raids from both Syria and Lebanon. AL FATAH (Conquest) was believed to be the organization responsible. Its leader was said to be Yasser Arafat, its composition primarily Palestinian, and it was alleged to be armed with Soviet and Czech weapons provided by Syria and Egypt. It was further alleged to be financially supported by Kuwait.<sup>13</sup>

In late 1966, an intensification in Arab terrorist activities gave rise to a U.N. resolution calling for Syria to prevent further incidents, a measure which was promptly vetoed in the U.N. Security Council by the Soviet Union. When Israel conducted subsequent reprisal raids into Jordan (which were condemned by the U.N.), there were violent riots as citizens demanded protection. With Syria, tensions escalated to the point that on April 7, 1967, the Israeli Air Force shot down six Syrian Migs, and extensive fire on the ground from tanks and artillery was exchanged. By mid-May, five Arab countries - Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait - had announced mobilization of their forces to deal with Israeli aggression. Muslim religious leaders were ordered to preach a jihad (holy war) to regain Palestine for the Arabs. The U.N. peacekeeping force, in place since 1957, was withdrawn at Egypt's request, despite U.N. Secretary General U Thant's "serious misgivings" about the negative effects on

regional stability.<sup>14</sup> The positions that force had filled were occupied by the PLO, now some 8000 activists strong, which had been integrated into the Egyptian army.<sup>15</sup>

On May 23, 1967, Egypt. again blockaded Israel's Red Sea access by denying her use of the Suez and by closing the straits of Tiran (at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba) with mines, land-based artillery batteries, armored boats, and aircraft. Negotiations were attempted; the rhetoric heated. On June 2nd, the PLO called for the jihad to begin "for the liberation of Palestine and the cleansing of the infidels."<sup>16</sup> In Israel on June 3rd, General Moshe Dayan, Israel's new Defense Minister, said at a press conference that while Israel welcomed all the help she could get on the diplomatic front, she would fight her own battles and "did not want British or American boys to get killed." Asked whether Israel had lost the military initiative in the Mideast crisis, General Dayan said: "If you mean to say we stand no chance in battle, then I cannot agree with you."<sup>17</sup>

On June 4th, Libya joined the cause and the waiting was over. At 7:30 a.m. on June 5, 1967, and nonstop throughout the day, the Israeli Air Force struck repeatedly at Egyptians Jordanian, and Syrian airfields, even penetrating as far east as western Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Within hours, Israel had destroyed the vast majority of Arab air forces on the ground, gaining immediate air superiority throughout the region. By the end of the first day, Israel claimed the destruction of over 400 Arab aircraft. In addition to the four countries attacked, Libya, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan, and Yemen all declared war on Israel the next day. Violent anti-American and anti-British demonstrations broke out

throughout the Mideast, particularly in Tunisia, Libya, and Syria, and a conference of Arab oil-producing nations decided to cut off oil supplies to any state committing aggression against any Arab country or giving aid to Israel. The Americans and British declared neutrality and stated their intentions to work for peace. The Soviets condemned Israel, reserving the right to take any action deemed appropriate.

But Israel was equally successful in carefully planned ground maneuvers, and the magnitude of its victory over the Arabs quickly became clear. The media in Egypt and Jordan reflected desperate embarrassment with broadcast reports that Israel had been able to accomplish its heinous acts only because of direct military intervention from U. S. and British carrier-based aviation. This allegation was immediately and unequivocally denied in London and Washington, Harold Wilson describing it as "a malicious and mischievous invention," and U. S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk as "a malicious charge known to be false."<sup>19</sup>

By June 10th, Israeli troops occupied the Gaza Strip, the entire Sinai peninsula, the West Bank and the Golan Heights on the border with Syria. The Arabs were decisively defeated - in six days.

In the eyes of the Baathists in Iraq, the '67 war was irrefutable proof of their assertion that the imperialist strategy was to broaden the split in the Arab world. A Baathist philosopher noted:

"The complete merger of Israel and the imperialist forces, particularly the United States, makes Israel a power greater than its actual presence. . . . Thus, Israel is not a state that can be dealt with through traditional warfare. Above this, it is Imperialism in its essence. The negation of

imperialism is revolution."<sup>20</sup>

This was not new, nor was the nature of the threat. The Baathist view was one of a protracted guerilla struggle, the brunt of which would be borne by a popular front of Palestinian organizations; the role of Arab governments would be "unqualified support," with actual action dependent on future Israeli expansion.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the strong rhetoric and radical slogans, however, Iraq simply did not achieve enough internal stability to truly assert herself on the Palestinian issue. Beginning with the embarrassment of Jordanian repression of the Palestinians in 1970,\* and continuing until the shah fell, the Iraqis had to live with a destabilizing sense of isolation and impotence. There were some accomplishments though. The Arab Liberation Front (ALF) was created as an arm of the Baathist Party in Palestine that was to ensure the merger of the Arab and Palestinian revolutions.<sup>22</sup> In essence a military organization, its task was to recruit and organize support from all Arab countries, particularly those surrounding the "Zionist entity," for the military struggle in Palestine. In the early 1970's, there were 50000 ALF soldiers on the Jordanian and Syrian fronts with Israel.<sup>23</sup> In June 1972, Iraq proposed a commitment with Syria and Egypt on a policy of continued confrontation with Israel. Five months later, Iraq became the first Arab state to link the "oil weapon" directly with attitude toward the Palestinian question.

\* There are at least two versions to this Jordanian repression issue. One says that Jordan's King Hussein has always held a



grudge against the Palestinians, particularly the PLO who murdered his grandfather. When disruptive factions of the PLO began to assert power and authority in Jordan, King Hussein had them expelled, or executed. Another says that PLO leader Yasser Arafat was in Jordan at the time of this "repression" and he was a participant in planning the factions elimination, which he did not claim as legitimately PLO. Further, Since Jordan is 50 per cent Palestinian, it is argued that King Hussein would not take repressive measures which would risk widespread disapproval. The expelled faction came to be called Black September, still considered by many to be PLO.

#### THE '73 WAR (YOM KIPPUR) AND CONTINUING

It would seem that the '67 war and third defeat, even though devastatingly embarrassing to strong Arab pride, might have shifted the Palestinian question from one of Israel's existence to one of Israel's boundaries; but this was not the case. The fighting never really stopped, and in fact, the Baathists proclaimed that the war itself had been a conspiracy by western imperialists to gain affirmation of Israel's existence.<sup>24</sup> The Baath official party newspaper, Al Thawrah, discussed that conspiracy and predicted that because the imperialists had not succeeded at gaining that affirmation, they would no doubt engineer another war emphasizing boundaries. The idea was that the issue could be further removed from the original, essential question of Israel's right to exist at all within the heart of, and at the expense of, the Arabs.

In October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked and the Arab-Israeli war was back in full swing. Iraq mobilized all its forces and sent them to Syria, and virtually every other Arab nation participated against Israel with either troops or oil embargoes. But again, Israeli forces were clearly superior, driving back massive attacks on both the Syrian and Egyptian fronts. On the latter, Israel advanced all the way to Cairo, and the taking of the city was prevented only by an early cease-

fire with Egypt. U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger executed his now famous "shuttle diplomacy," but the fighting with Syria lasted about six months.

Many Israelis criticized their government's handling of the 1973 war and as a result, Prime Minister Golda Meir resigned and was replaced by Yitzhak Rabin. In 1975, a new agreement was made with Egypt under which Israeli troops would withdraw from part of the western Sinai occupied in '73. In 1977, Menachem Begin succeeded Rabin and in '78, he met with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and US President Carter in discussions which led to the Camp David Accords. Under that agreement there would be a peace treaty, Israel would completely withdraw from the Sinai, and there would be a five year period of self-government for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank after which a final decision would be made on their status. The treaty was signed, and the Israelis completed withdrawal from the Sinai in 1982, but no arrangement for self-government in the Gaza Strip or West Bank has been established.

Iraq responded to the Camp David accords by organizing in November 1978 a summit conference for all Arab governments except Egypt. In unprecedented Arab unanimity, the following was agreed upon: (1) rejection of the Camp David accords; (2) a common stand on the interpretation of UN resolution 242;\* (3) reaffirmation of the PLO as sole representative of the Palestinian people; and (4) economic and military support for the front-line Arab states.<sup>25</sup> Al Thawrah said:

We know that the peaceful "efforts" that are made by US imperialism seek to "subdue Arab thought" just as they

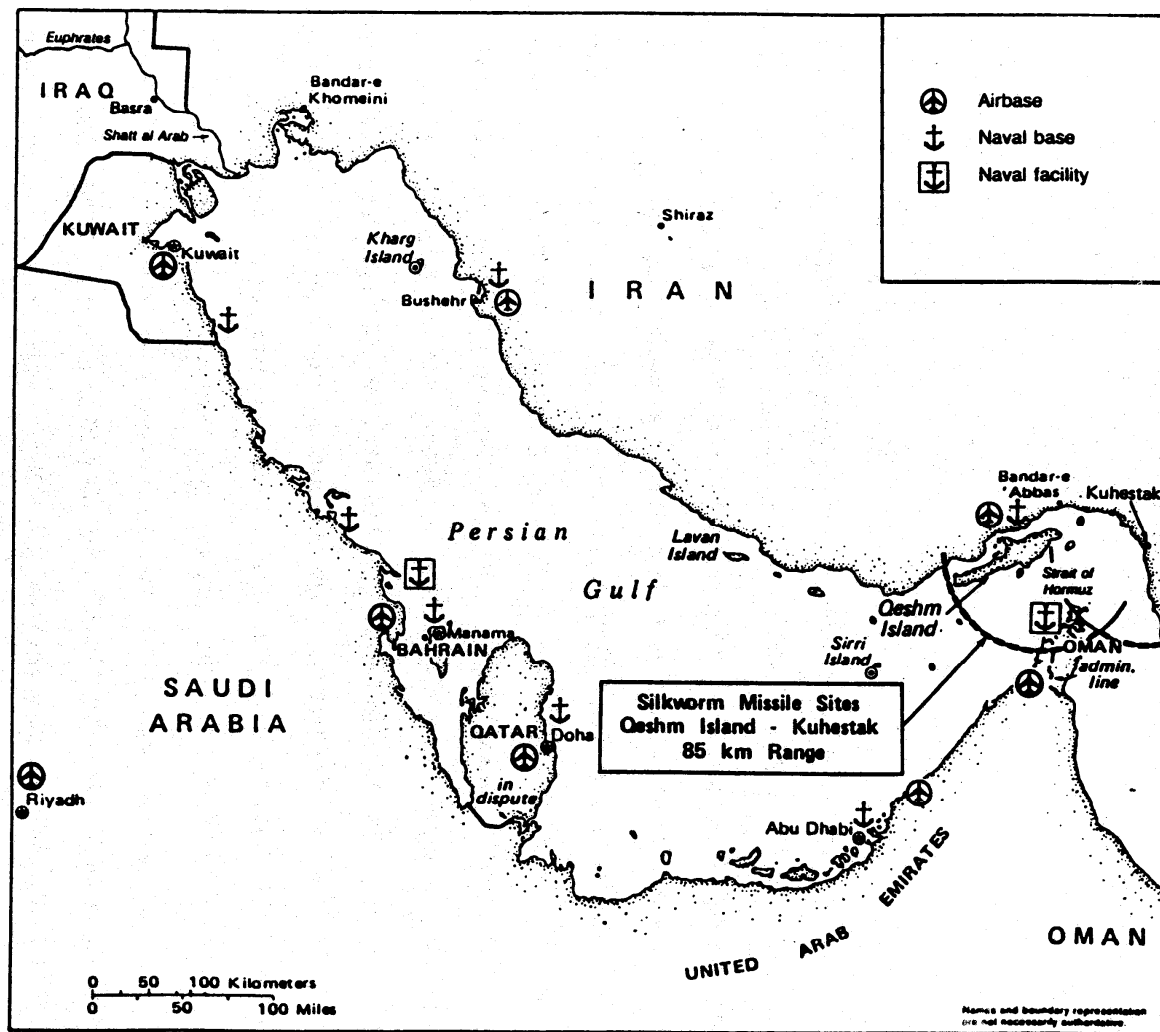
subdued the Arab regimes. We know that these efforts seek "to persuade Arab thought" to turn the "historic struggle" between the ideology of Arab liberation and that of Zionist colonialism into a "geographic struggle" over a few kilometers here and a few kilometers there.<sup>26</sup>

In 1988, Palestinian camps are still filled, now with second and third generation refugees, and the occupied territories - in the eyes of many - remain just that. Despite at least ten years of apparent Arab ambivalence most recently characterized by the return of Egypt into the Arab fold, the Palestinians are again rising up, and getting the world's attention and sympathy. Most Arab states, particularly the front line of Egypt, Syria and Jordan, have found themselves in the uncomfortable position of supporting the principles of Palestinian self-determination per se, but having to take the necessary self-preservation measures to deny Palestinians too much freedom to maneuver at home or in the region as a whole. Perhaps victims of their own years of rhetoric and inaction on the refugee issue, historically unstable Arab regimes don't seem to want to live with or fight for them, but can't survive politically without championing their cause.

Through that same period, in which the war between Iran and Iraq has evolved into a stalemate of "acceptable" attrition, both Israel and the United States have demonstrated that they

\* (UN resolutions 242 and 338, passed in 1967 and 1973 respectively called for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and Arab recognition of the right of all nations in the regions including Israel, to live in peace and security;) share with Iran a common strategic-military interest in containin Iraq, and the forces of Arab "radicalism" in general. Both undeniably supplied arms to the Khomeini regime, further fueling Iraq's continued rhetoric against the Zionist-Imperialist enemy. Nevertheless, current efforts to resolve the Palestinian

dilemma focus on concessions by all concerned, apparently proceeding with the concept that reality - the current existence of a well-established, powerful country and a large group of displaced people demanding the right to determine the course of their own future based on their own beliefs and culture - must prevail; neither will go away. As negotiations proceed, it appears most essential to remember that for many Arab regimes, who for forty years have publicly articulated their pro-Palestinian position and linked the Palestinian cause to their own political credibility, it will be extremely difficult even to compromise. In some cases, such as Iraq, it is by no means certain that an existing Arab regime will risk taking steps to redefine the Arab stand on an issue that is inextricably linked to the regime's internal acceptance, legitimacy, prestige in the Arab world, and most basic ideology. Wouldn't it be sadly ironic if the Iraqi government found it necessary to escalate the now unwanted war with Iran in an attempt to divert internal and international attention from the Palestine issue - to which an Arab-supported compromise solution, one which accepted Israel's right to exist, would slap the Baathist ideology right in the face?



5

# BEST CASE SCENARIO . . .

It's no new experience for the nations surrounding the Persian Gulf to find their region an arena for conflicts between the world's powers. The war between Iran and Iraq, however, marked the first time that the great powers really had to come to terms with their dependence on the resources, and decisions of these nations which had heretofore been little more than pawns on

the strategic chessboard. Since the early days of the Cold War when Eisenhower called the Mideast "the most strategically important area in the world," the United States has attempted to apply a rather simple policy - common defense of the free world against communism - to a very complex regional situation.<sup>1</sup> It involved the U.S. in the local conflicts of the Middle East and in the internal politics of individual states. It seemed to achieve some success when the Baghdad Pact, later called the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), effectively contained the Soviet Union's southern flank with countries who appeared outwardly pro-west. It evolved into Nixon's twin pillars policy.

From the Soviet perspective, the picture could be quite different. The Gulf region is close to them but far from the U.S., but it was the U.S. who was engaged in imperialist bloc-building, sending arms and setting up military bases to threaten the Soviet Union. Their reaction could be understandably to want to deny to the U.S. the use of the area for military purposes. To do so, they worked to undermine governments which cooperated with the Americans and sought favor with those who opposed them.<sup>2</sup>

In the chessboard view, it would seem in retrospect that American diplomacy, though always backed by the totality of power, has been dominant. No country in the region became a Soviet satellite in the East European sense; the combatants remain two; oil shipments from the Persian Gulf have not been impeded; reduced oil production in Iran and Iraq has not had a negative impact on world energy supplies; and the superpowers have, for the most part, kept aloof. Since the announcement in 1968 of British withdrawal from the area, probably no scenario

for a gulf war has contemplated such inconsequence.<sup>3</sup> An American must hope that this is because United States policy has stressed the responsibility of local states and refrained from actually moving in, or even really threatening to. One must also wonder, however, particularly in the aftermath of the October '73 war and the assertion of the "oil weapon," if the entire non-Arab world still fails to recognize the legitimacy, or perceived legitimacy of some of the strongest forces of Arab nationalism - liberation, independence, unity, recovery of Palestine. Could it be that these peoples of the Gulf states really have no desire for long-term ties with any superpower; that, depending on the circumstances either would suffice as a temporary partner to provide the goods, skills, technology, and arms which would complete the process of emancipation from all outside influence? Could it be that the oil weapon was powerful enough that the superpowers could be effectively played against each other? With the collapse of the shah and the rise to power of Ayatollah Rouhallah Khomeini in Iran, the answers to these questions became, at least, more debatable.

#### THE AYATOLLAH

Khomeini set forth his policies in a series of lectures delivered while exiled to Iraq in the '60's and '70's. For him, the only salvation for Muslims throughout the world from the corrupt and immoral society to which they had been subjected was to "create a victorious and triumphant Islamic political revolution" which would "destroy the heads of treason, the idols, the human images, and the false gods which disseminate injustice on earth."<sup>4</sup> To do this he called on the religious 'ulema' "to

put an end to this injustice and to seek to bring happiness to millions of peoples through destroying and eliminating the unjust governments and through establishing a sincere and active Moslem government."<sup>5</sup> His theories, if implemented, would give the ulema exclusive authority, entrusting them with "governing and running the affairs of people."<sup>6</sup> Implicit in his position was an intense opposition to artificially created territorial states, and his quest for a universal pan-Islamic state under his spiritual and political leadership. He and his followers believe that the division and fragmentation of Muslims into independent political entities is the work of "imperialists and self-seeking rulers."<sup>7</sup> Apparently convinced of his role as messiah, he said in a speech on February 11, 1980:

"We will export our revolution to the four corners of the world because our revolution is Islamic, and the struggle will continue until the cry of 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammed is his Messenger' prevails throughout the world."<sup>8</sup>

Khomeini's conception of religion as the driving force behind Iran's domestic and foreign policy is diametrically opposed to Iraq's view of it as the Arabs' great cultural heritage, a part of but subordinate to Arab nationalism. In other words, the Iraqi Baathists believe in separation of church and state. According to Saddam Hussein:

"We do not believe in dealing with life through religion because it would not serve the Arab nation. It would only serve to divide the nation into different religions and numerous sects and schools of thought.

Nevertheless, the Iraqi's were initially hesitant to confront the new Iranian regime. Perhaps uneasy with the particularly Iranian and Shiite nature of the movement (Iran's population is 90 per cent Shiite, and in Iraq to a lesser degree the majority is also



Shiite), and perhaps seeing an opportunity to exploit their recent successes at achieving regional influence, the Baathists at first hailed the revolution. Hussein noted that Iran's severance of relations with Israel and Egypt, her abandonment of the shah's role as the Gulf's policeman, and her willingness to join the non-aligned movement, attested to the new regime's positive orientation.<sup>10</sup>

The new Iranian revolutionary government did not respond favorably. The Iraqi government was described as "fascists and racists" who were "fighting Islam."<sup>11</sup> Quickly, Saddam Hussein reversed his stand, calling the Iranian "ruling clique" phony and expansionist, and describing Khomeini's religion as "a fake mask covering Persian racism and the deep-rooted hatred of the Arabs."<sup>12</sup> A period of fierce repression followed in Iraq. Those with pro-Khomeini views were either imprisoned, executed, or expelled. The Baathist Party was totally purged, primarily of Shiite followers. The Iranians protested and threatened violence, while concurrently executing thousands of pro-shah Iranians to consolidate their own power. The border dispute revived.

On November 4, 1979, amidst the turmoil of the Khomeini takeover and in the wake of Camp David, the United States embassy in Teheran was seized, its occupants held hostage for return of the shah. In December, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Whether they were trying to rescue a pro-Soviet regime weakening against militant Islam, or taking advantage of the obviously weakened U. S. position in the region, the world had to accept the fact that

one of Russia's border countries, adjacent to Iran, had been absorbed. The move forced the Carter administration to declare that the United States would resist with all appropriate means, including military force, any Soviet move representing an assault on American vital interests (presumably in the direction of the oil fields or the Indian Ocean).

Tensions escalated. Iraq blamed Iran for failing to realize that a more realistic approach to strategic diplomacy was in the region's best interest, and warned Khomeini to cease his efforts to subvert the Iraqi government. Iran blamed Iraq for fighting the undeniable truths of Islam, and accused the Baathists of having failed to support the Palestinians, a cause that should be pursued not as an Arab-Israeli conflict, but as a struggle between Muslims and Zionists led by Iran.<sup>13</sup> The Soviets meanwhile courted Iran with her vocal anti-U. S. sentiment, while providing arms to Iraq despite the decreasing pro-Soviet stance of Saddam Hussein. Worried about the hostage crisis, fearing oil disruption and regional instability, and not wanting to push Iran closer to Moscow, the US maintained neutrality.

Early in September 1980, Ayatollah Khomeini sent his personal greeting, in the form of a leaflet, to Muslims from all over the world making the annual pilgrimage to Mecca:

"The Muslims of the world should recognize these sowers of discord and thwart their plots. Simultaneously with the attack by the superpowers on Islamic countries such as Afghanistan and the cruel and brutal massacre of Afghan Muslims who do not want foreigners to interfere in their affairs, or the United States which has its hand in every kind of corruption; and simultaneously with the general attack by Israel on the Muslims of beloved Palestine and Lebanon; and at the same time when Israel is busy with its treacherous plan to transfer its capital to Jerusalem; and when Muslims feel the need for unity more than ever, Sadat, this traitor servant of the United States and friend and brother of Begin and the former shah, and Saddam Hussein,

that lackey of America, are busy sowing discord among the Muslims and agree to any crime ordered by their criminal master the United States by its repeated attacks on Iran.. . Muslim nations should know that Iran is a country which is formally at war with the United States, and our youths, our brave army, our revolutionary guard are defending Iran against the United States. The clashes in the west of our country are clashes engineered by the United States and atheist, subservient forces face us there every day."14

On September 22, 1980, Iraq announced that her planes had hit ten Iranian airfields and that her troops had penetrated into Iranian territory on three major fronts. A full scale war had been launched. Its purpose, according to Saddam Hussein, was to blunt the edge of Khomeini's fundamentalist, backward movement and to thwart his attempt to export his Islamic revolution to Iraq and the Arab Gulf states.

Through at least five years of buildup and eight years of war, a great deal has occurred, or been alleged to have occurred, in the world. These are the years, among other things, of the Iran-Contra affair. Perhaps a good way to regain a perspective on this most recent period is through a somewhat cursory chronological review of some pertinent events, quotations, add allegations.15

1975

- The Algiers Accord ends Iran's support for the Kurdish rebellion in NE Iraq, adjusts the land frontier, and fixes the southern section of the border as the center of the



1978

- Iraq leads Arab countries in unified denunciation of the Camp David accords.
- Saddam Hussein says: "The Soviets are our best friends. The USSR always sides with the Arabs. But we should not fall in love with the Soviet Union if it renounces us."16

1979

- Shah of Iran is overthrown (16 Jan)
- Khomeini returns (1 Feb)
- PLO leader Yasser Arafat is first to visit Khomeini (FEB)  
TIME 12/8/86.\*
- Iran severs ties with Israel, and announces support for the PLO cause.
- Skirmishes and political tension between Iran and Iraq revive the border dispute.
- Sandanista National Liberation Frdnt overthrows Somoza in Nicaragua (19 Jul)
- U. S. embassy in Teheran and 53 hostages taken (4 Nov).
- President Carter declares national emergency, freezes all U.S. held Iranian assets, and blocks delivery of military equipment to Iran.
- USSR invades Afghanistan

1980

- BANI-SADR elected President of Iran. He says: "Our revolution will not win if it is not exported. We are going to create a new world order in which deprived people will not always be deprived and oppressors will not always be oppressors." WP 2/5/80\* It is only through the overthrow of existing regimes "that the Arab world would change." CSM  
2/13/80

- Saddam Hussein told an Arab conference in Baghdad that the U.S. had made "monthly or at least yearly attempts" during the preceding five years to restore relations with Iraq, but that Iraq would "continue to view the U.S. as an enemy" as long as Israel occupies Arab territory. AL-THAWRAH 3/23/80
- US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brezinski said on the "McNeil-Lehrer Report" two weeks later:  
  
"It's been our position for quite some time that we neither deplore nor fear the Arabic renaissance. . . . We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq. . . . We do not wish to continue the anomalous state of US-Iraq relations.
- Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Premier, is wounded in an assassination attempt which Iraq blames on Iran; Iran steps up propaganda urging Shiite rebellion; border skirmishes continue.

\* (If source is not written out, one of following abbreviations will be used: WP = Washington Post; NYT = New York Times; MH = Miami Herald; LAT = Los Angeles Times; WSJ = Wall Street Journal; BS = Baltimore Sun; CSM = Christian Science Monitor; SIC = Senate Intelligence Committee Report dated 1/29/87; TCR = Tower Commission Report dated 2/26/87; NBC = National Broadcasting Company News. See footnote 15.)

- Failed hostage rescue attempt; 8 dead (APR)
- Iraq abrogates the Algiers Agreement and invades Iran on three fronts, including full-scale invasion in the Khuzistan province.
- Robert McFarlane, National Security Council (NSC) staffer, arranges covert negotiations with Iranians for release of hostages. Reagan campaign aides involved. MH 4/12/87
- Iraqi advances end after six weeks; Iran destroys Iraq's Gulf oil export facilities and closes Basra.

- President Carter announces hostage release the day before President Reagan's inauguration.
- Israel begins shipping American made weapons to Iran (FEB) MH 4/12/87
- President Reagan authorizes CIA to organize Contras in Nicaragua MH 1/18/87
- Iranian counteroffensive begins (MAY)
- Israel attacks Iraqi nuclear facility (JUNE). Iraq accuses Iran of complicity. Israel justifies attack by claiming that Iraq would produce nuclear weapons, not electrical power. (Since Iraq's relationship with France over the years is not a subject of this report, it must suffice to say that in addition to the necessary backing to build the nuclear facility, France provided \$7 billion in arms aid between 1981 and 1988, one-third of the west's total.)

STATE

#### DEPARTMENT

- Marine Lieutenant Colonel (then Major) Oliver North joins the NSC (AUG)
- At the third Islamic Summit, Crown Prince Fahd of Saudia Arabia, reading a statement from King Khalid (who created Saudia Arabia in 1932 after defeating Sharif Husein in Mecca,) urged all Muslim countries to resist military alliances with the superpowers.<sup>17</sup> His brother Prince Saud later strongly criticized Oman for participating in the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force exercise Operations Bright Star II.<sup>18</sup>
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - formed between Saudia Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab

Emirates - establishes new Gulf state unity. GCC supports introduction into region of U. S. AWACS, and acknowledges that U.S. has relations with some 24 Mideast countries, but notes that among those, none. has done more than Israel to:

1. Cause regional instability.
  2. Seize territory.
  3. Remain diplomatically isolated, regionally and globally.
  4. Guarantee bankruptcy should foreign aid be withdrawn.
  5. Flout the U.S. Arms Export Control Act<sup>19</sup>
- GCC denounces Soviets, not unlike Iran had.
  - Coup attempt in Bahrain, blamed on Iran, is foiled.

1982

- Prince Fahd of Saudia Arabia stated that despite what was told to U.S. Congress, the AWACS "will deprive Israel of the element of surprise whenever it wants to attack any Arab country."<sup>20</sup>
- Israeli shipments of non-U.S arms to Iran begin to take place, and Israeli "middlemen" arrange "private deals involving U. S. arms." SIC p.2
- CIA recruits Adolfo Calero, a Coca-Cola bottling plant manager from Managua, to head Contras (i.e. Nicaraguan Democratic Front) MH 1/18/87
- Israel invades Lebanon (JUN). US military presence in region reoriented.
- According to Israeli sources, Saddam Hussein says: "When Iraq emerges victorious from our war with Iran, then Israel will cease to exist."<sup>21</sup>
- Iraq withdraws from nearly all Iranian territory. STATE



DEPARTMENT

- Iraq announces readiness for cease fire.
- Shultz succeeds Haig as Secretary of State
- In a classic example of speaking to please the audience, as opposed to telling the truth, Saddam Hussein says to a visiting U.S. Congressman: "A secure state is necessary for both Israel and the Palestinians."22
- Sometime in July, U.S. becomes aware of evidence that Iran was supporting terrorist groups, including groups engaged in hostage-taking. TCR pB2
- Iran begins war of attrition.

1983

- U.S. embassy in Beirut bombed; 17 dead.
- U.S. administration launches Operation Staunch (an effort to limit the flow of arms to Iran from third countries) after NSC concludes it would not be in U.S. interests for Iraq to lose the war. WP 12/10/86
- CIA directs mining of Nicaraguan harbors. TCR p.C2
- General Secord retires from the Air Force, Robert McFarlane is appointed National Security Advisor, and RADM Poindexter is named McFarlane's deputy.
- U.S. ships provide Naval Gun Fire Support in Lebanon.
- U.S. Marine Compound in Beirut bombed; 241 dead.
  - U.S. knew Iran ordered and financed the bombing. MH  
12/7/87
  - U.S. saw complicity (Iranian) in this and other terrorist attacks. TCR
- U.S. invades Grenada (OCT) -
- UN Security Council Resolution 540 calls for ceasefire; Iraq

accepts; Iran rejects. Tanker war begins.

1984

- Egyptian President Mubarek escorts Jordan's King Hussein to Washington to urge President Reagan to negotiate with the PLO (FEB)23
- Iran invades north of Basra, falling back under counterattack. Iraq uses chemical weapons, and increases attacks on shipping at Kharg Island. Iran responds by attacking ships. STATE DEPARTMENT
- NSC memo recommends U.S. reevaluate its attitude toward Iran. It notes that Iran should be viewed as a "menace" to U.S. interests and suggests a renewal of covert operations against it. The memo indicated knowledge of exiled Iranians interested in "installing" a pro-western government in Iran, with foreign help. TCR p.B2
- Saudia Arabia asked by CIA to fund contras; they decline. CIA turns to Israel. Nevertheless, Robert MacFarlane says, the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. provided at least \$1 million per month from "personal funds" for two years TCR p-C5
- Ghorbanifar, an exiled Iranian businessman, begins a series of meetings aimed at bringing the U.S. into an arms relationship with Iran. SIC p.3
- U.S. government analysis (OCT) concludes Khomeini's death was a precondition to changes in Iran and improved relations with the U.S. It also includes the possibility of resuming arms sales to Iran depending on Teheran's "willingness to restore formal relations." The study conveys "an impression

of American powerlessness to affect changes in Iran" which would continue indefinitely. TCR p.B2

- Amidst growing terrorism, a Kuwaiti jetliner is hijacked and forced to Teheran. After 5 days, Iranian security men storm the plane. Four hijackers are captured; two Americans are killed. Iran rejects U.S. extradition request.
- CIA reports to Admiral Poindexter that Mujaheddin E. Khalg, under Soviet influence, is group likely to succeed Khomeini in Iran. Reassessment of U. S. policy is directed. SIC
- In Beirut, Lebanese Shiite militiamen lay siege to Palestinian settlements, essentially barricading the Palestinians inside to prevent them from rebuilding their guerilla forces in Beirut. (The siege did not end until Jan `88 when the Lebanese backed off as a show of solidarity with the Palestinians rising up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Syrian soldiers manned observation posts NYT 1/21/88)

Note: While not a subject of this paper, the rise of "terrorism" over the years played an unquestionable role in the conduct of foreign policy, of strategic diplomacy, of politico-military affairs. This gross example of man's inhumanity to man demands detailed study, but in the broadest sense, it is essential to remember three things:

- (1) It is extremely difficult to negotiate with a government which, from the outset, denies complicity and therefore refuses to discuss the matter.
- (2) When involvement in a terrorist act is denied and that denial is not believed, the accuser must see it as underlining the perpetrator's desire to refute peaceful settlement, indicating that violence is the only thing to which he will respond.
- (3) To maintain a level of rationality, any response

to terrorism must ask the question: Will it  
achieve more than revenge?

1985

- Khomeini reportedly directs a sting operation aimed at U.S., Israel, and Soviet Union in order to get weapons and equipment for Iran. It centered around the leak of false reports of his impending death. U. S. News and World Report 3/22/87
- Iraq repulses an attack north of Basra after the Iranians briefly seize the strategic Baghdad - Basra road. State Department
- Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega visits Moscow.
- Truck bomb outside mosque in Beirut kills 80, wounds 250. Pro-Khomeini Hesbollah (Army of God) is blamed, but denies responsibility. (The PLO operates in six separate groups, according to an Israeli opinion, the most radical being the Hesbollah). 24
- A draft National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) recommends:  
  
". . . that the U.S. encourage Western allies and friends to help Iran meet its import requirement so as to reduce the attractiveness of Soviet assistance and trade offers, while demonstrating the value of correct relations with the West. This includes a provision of selected military equipment as determined on a case-by-case basis." SIC pl; TCR pp B8-9.
- TWA 847 is hijacked in Beirut and a U. S. Navy diver is killed. Israeli officials ask Ghorbanifar to use his influence in Iran to obtain the release of the hostages. After two weeks, hostages are released because of secret intervention by Rasfanjani, Speaker of the Iranian parliament. TCR p B3.
- David Kimcke, director general of the Israeli Foreign

inistry, tells Robert MacFarlane that Israel has established a dialogue with Iran. SIC p.4. Kimcke seeks the position of the U.S. government "toward engaging in a political discourse with Iran," which would ultimately need arms to show seriousness of intentions. Iran, Kimcke said, understood it needed to show "bonafides" and could do so by releasing hostages in Lebanon. TCR pB14.

- Iran acquires silkworm missiles from China
- Iran courts U.S. representatives repeatedly, making them believe that hostages would be released as weapons were delivered. Some were, but others were taken. Between 30 Aug 85 and 7 Nov 86, Iran received 2008 TOW's and parts for Hawk missiles. Israel provided, U.S. resupplied Israel. Some of the money that Iran paid for the weapons was diverted, in possible violation of U.S. law, to the Nicaraguan Contras. TCR; SLC.
- MacFarlane resigns amid cabinet-level turmoil as to whether arms should be sold to Iran, and whether or not there was such a thing as a moderate factor in Iran.
- Israeli government employee alleges Israel is producing nuclear weapons. He is later convicted at trial, held behind closed doors of security violations.
- 1985 U.S. policy on Iran-Iraq war, according to the Department of State:

"The US has followed a policy of neutrality since the beginning of the war. We seek an end to the war that will preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both Iran and Iraq. We welcome constructive international diplomatic efforts for a negotiated conclusion. The US remains committed to freedom of access to the gulf, a matter of vital importance to the international community. The US does not permit US arms and munitions to be shipped to either belligerent and has discouraged all free-world arms

shipments to Iran because, unlike Iraq, Iran is adamantly opposed to negotiations or a mediated end to the conflict.

The US has repeatedly condemned Iraq's use of chemical warfare.

The US broke relations with Iran in April 1980, following the November 1979 seizure of the American hostages and US Embassy in Tehran. On November 26, 1984, Iraq resumed formal diplomatic relations with the US, which Iraq had broken during the June 1967. Arab-Israeli war. This improvement in bilateral relations does not reflect any change in US neutrality regarding the war."

1986

- Iran seizes the abandoned Iraqi port city of Faw.

Khomeini has made it clear that he will not honor U.N.

resolutions, and will not stop the war until the Iraqi

regime under Saddam Hussein is toppled. State Department

- Iran tells U.S. officials that it is "terrified of new Soviet threat" and wants improved relations with U.S. WP

3/30/87

- U.S. bombs Libya (14 Apr), in part in response to terrorist bombing of a West German disco which injured and killed U.S. servicemen. U.S. linked this to Libya.

- Iraq begins air campaign against economic targets, cutting sharply into Iran's oil export level. Iran responds by broadening the scope of her attacks on Persian Gulf shipping, using naval vessels for the first time, and singling out ships associated with Kuwait.

- Iranian Parliament confirms Beirut newspaper article which reported that U.S. had supplied arms to Iran.

- Israeli Foreign Minister Peres says arms sale to Iran was U.S. idea.

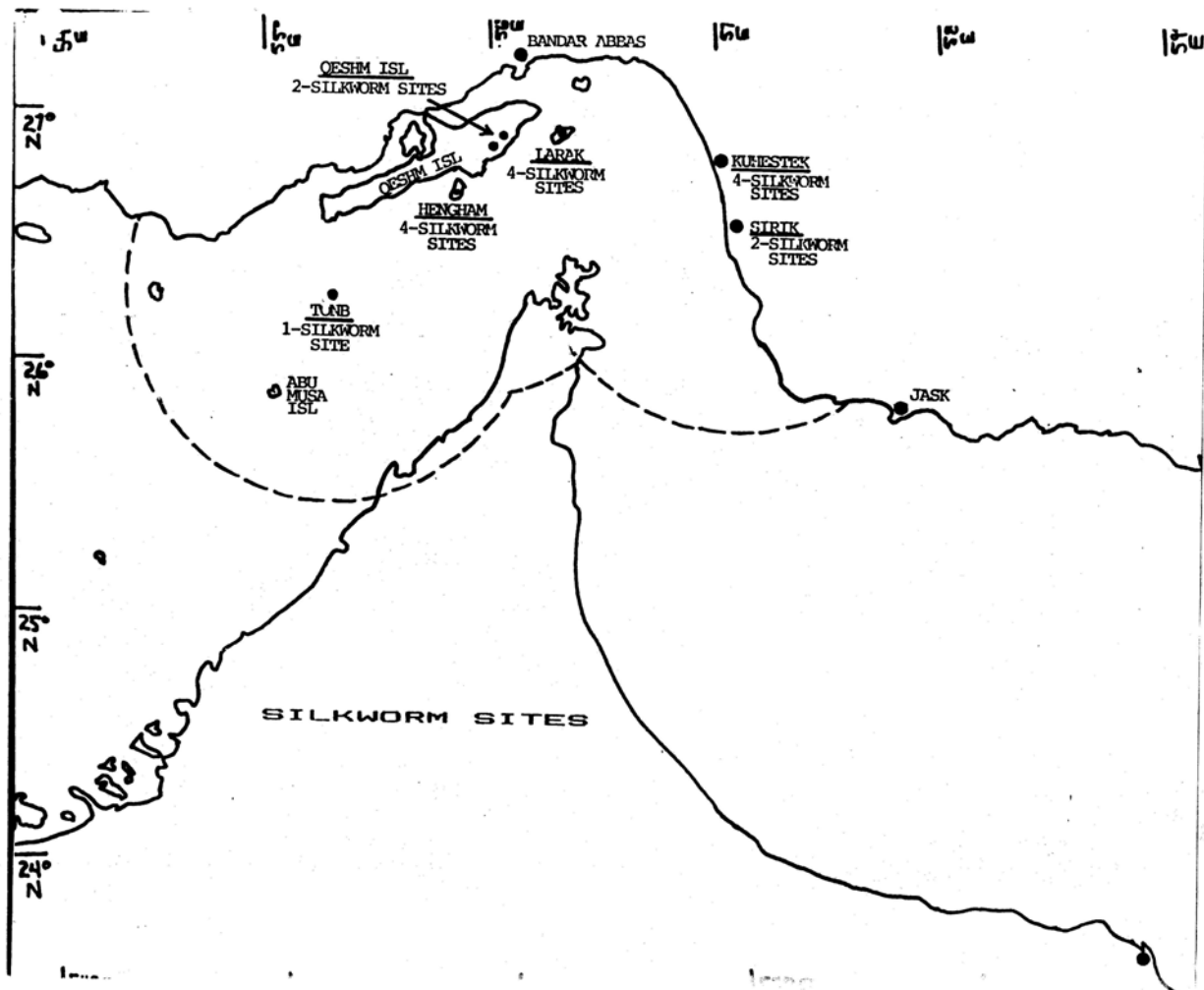
- Kuwait asked Soviet Union and U.S. for help against

Iranian attacks. Both responded affirmatively. Eleventh hour negotiations result in Soviet role being limited to three tankers and their escorts. US would reflag eleven Kuwaiti vessels, and protect them.

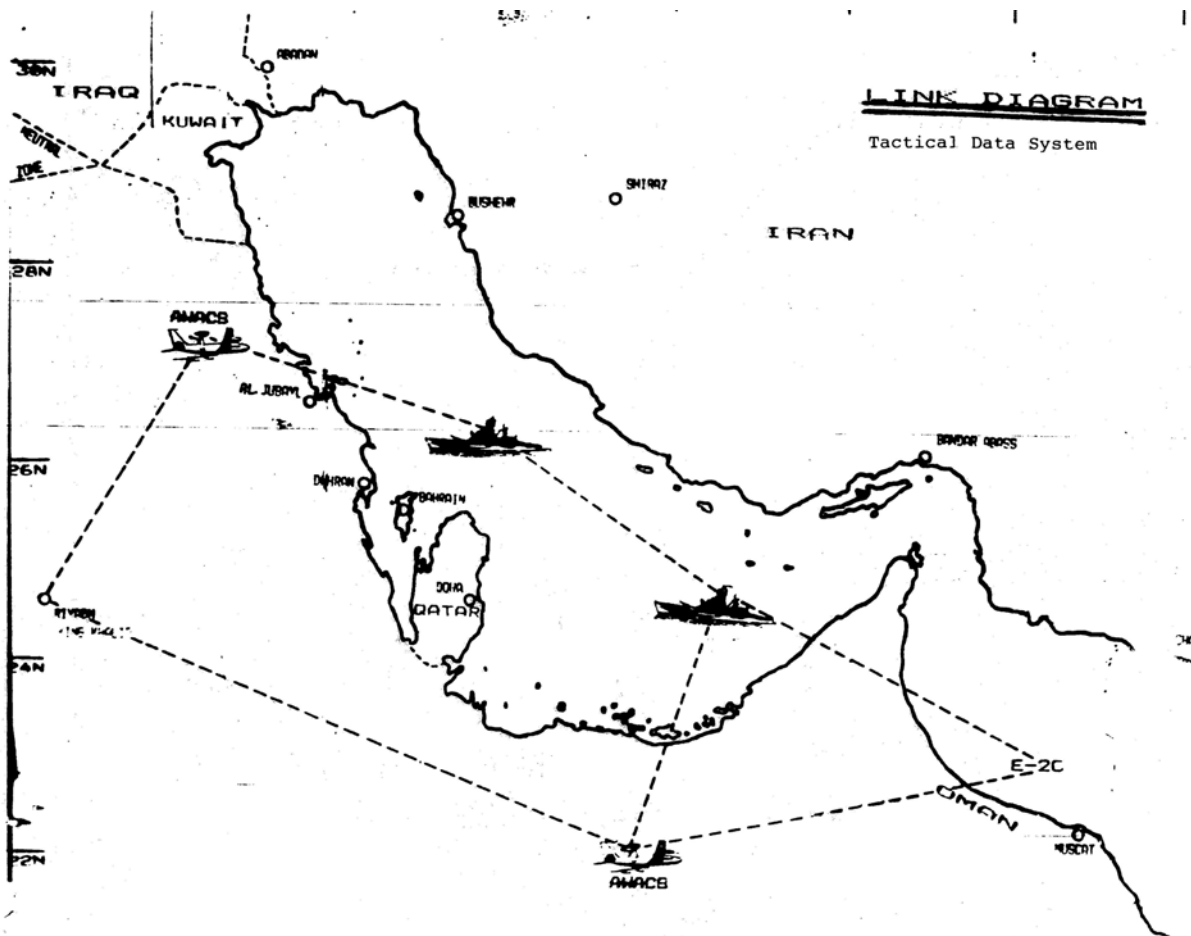
- Iranian naval vessel detains and searches a Soviet tanker.

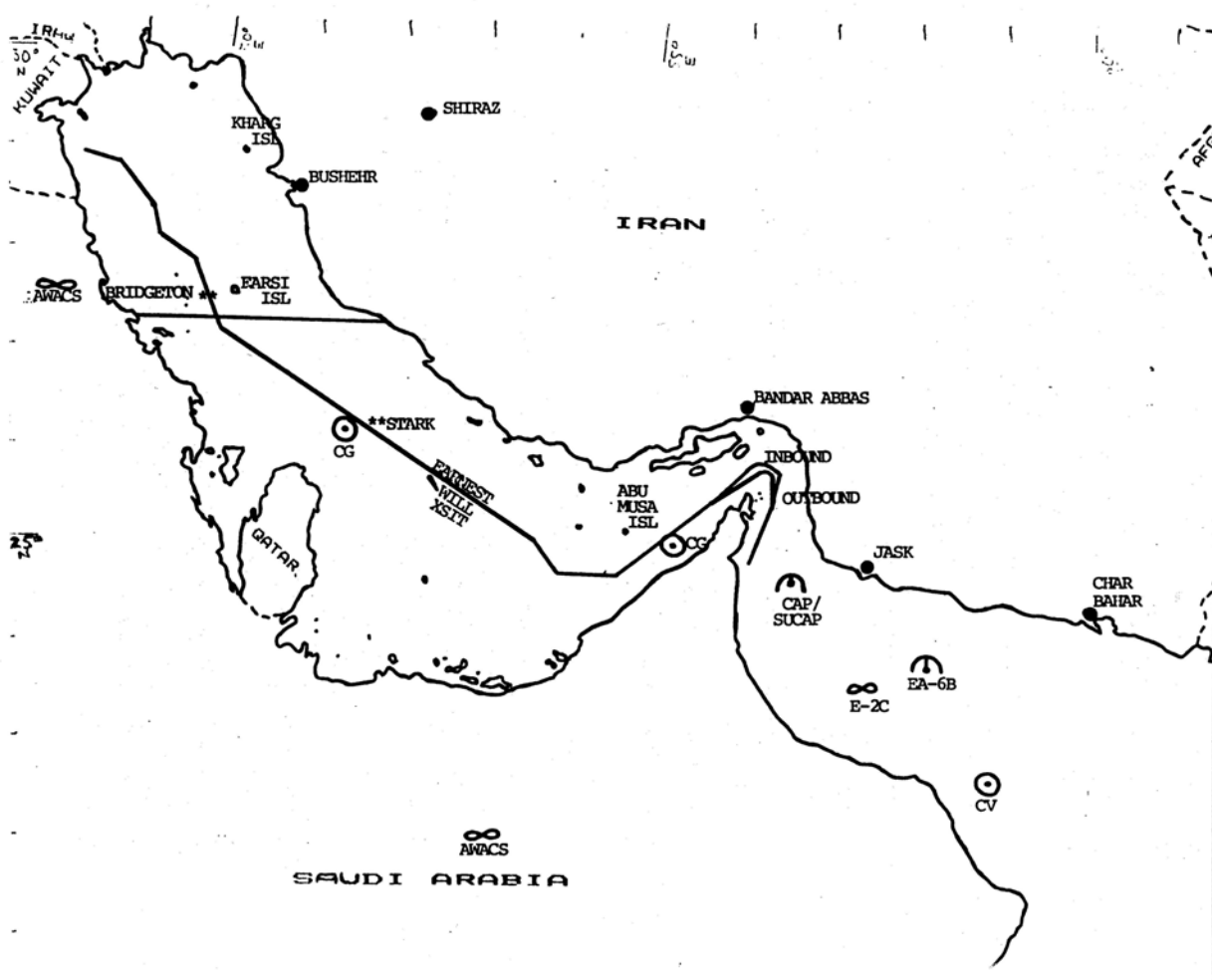
1987

- Iranian gunboats attack Soviet merchantship.
- USS STARK is hit by French Exocet missile accidentally fired from Iraqi aircraft.
- "Operation Earnest Will," reflagged tanker protection begins. Concept includes two AWACS, with fighter protection of southern one shared by Saudis and U.S. carrier-based aircraft. At height in fall, 37 U.S. ships are in the Gulf.
- Supertanker BRIDGETON hit by mine.
- Violence erupts in Mecca, reportedly Iranian inspired. Approximately 400 are killed. Saudis go to their equivalent of DEFCON 2, and launch strip-alert fighters
- Arab consensus condemns Iran and supports UN called - for cease fires.
- INF Treaty is signed
- Saudia Arabia and UAE indicate willingness to open channels to Iran. Syria, however, approaches Iran, suggesting a dialogue be opened with the Arab states on the Persian Gulf that support Iraq Saddam Hussein calls this









attempt at "a separate peace" treacherous. WP 2/3/88

1988

- Iraqi pipeline affair is alleged with echoes of the Iran-contra affair. Attorney General Edwin Meese, his long-time friend E. Blob Wallach (a San Francisco lawyer), and Israeli businessmen close to Peres were reportedly in cahoots for over two years in setting up a \$1 billion pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea (precluding necessity for Iraq to use the Gulf) which the Israelis would promise not be sabotage, perhaps in return for US payments to Peres' party. `WP

2/2/88

- Soviets indicate readiness to pull out of Afghanistan.
- Pakistan presses to ensure no communist government left behind, becoming increasingly concerned about India's ties with the Soviets.
- Increasing number of incidents occur involving Iraqi aircraft and U.S. forces.
- U.S. cuts back presence in Gulf to 24 ships, sending home battleship, AEGIS cruiser, and major amphibious ship.
- Syria quietly takes credit for forestalling an Iranian winter offensive. Soviets encourage improved Syrian-PLO relations. NYT 1/21/88
- Palestinian uprisings in occupied territories require increasing level of violence used by Israeli troops to control. Over 100 Arabs killed in three months. U.N. denounces Israeli tactics. Anti-Israeli sentiments escalate worldwide.
- Ali Safavi, spokesman for Peoples Mujaheddin of Iran, headquartered in Baghdad, says following in CNN interview on 11 Feb:

- factional infighting in Iran has intensified.
- the war is a stalemate
- Khomeini will fall
- Khomeini did not lead the revolution, the Mujaheddin did, but the shah had most of them killed, so Khomeini just filled the power vacancy.
- Mujaheddin is not Marxist
- Since the revolution began, Khomeini has had 70,000 of his opponents killed, and has taken 140,000 political prisoners.
- The people of Iran want peace and a form of democratic government
- Anti-U.S. sentiment is to some degree existent because of different historical perceptions, but the riots and special events are staged.

- U.S. Palestinian peace proposal presented throughout

Mideast by Secretary of State Shultz elicits mixed reactions. It is apparently based on President Reagan's 1982 concept of "property for peace," a foundation on which Israel has not recently been willing to negotiate. (The issue of land for peace, however, appears almost a "given" and the real question to Israel may be how much land and where. For example, Israel is unlikely to accept an historically hostile force located such that they occupy the territory adjacent to a 9 mile wide strip of land connecting northern and southern Israel). It also reduces the five year plan set forth in the Camp David accords to six months.

- U.S. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Higgins, in command of U.N. force in Beirut, is taken hostage. Hesbollah is blamed. Two days later, Israeli security forces located LCoI Higgins in Beirut, at a location at which rescue was feasible. In so informing President Reagan, Israel also offered to assist in the rescue. The offer was denied. 26
- Cities war begins, with Iraq conducting initial missile attack on Teheran, Iran responding in kind at Baghdad, and the escalation spreading to other cities.
- Israeli Prime Minister Shamir visits Washington. Resolution on Palestinian peace initiative is not achieved.
- LCoI North, Admiral Poindexter, and General Secord are indicted for their roles in the Iran-Contra affair.
- 82nd airborne sent to Honduras in show of force after Sandanistas cross Honduran border.
- Saudis purchase medium-range (1000-1300 miles), nuclear-capable surface-to-surface missiles from China, offering

assurance that they only have the conventional variant, and they would only be used defensively.

- Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze declines to repeat his earlier promise of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

- Israel accused of planning to strike new Saudi missile sites as an unacceptable threat. Saudis vow to counterattack, if necessary, with all remaining missiles.

- Iraq conducts massive chemical attack, perhaps killing thousands of civilians. Iran's Rasfanzani applauds US denunciation of the attack, even though Iran has also been accused of using chemical weapons.

- Soviets reconfirm plans to withdraw from Afghanistan.

- Kuwaiti airliner is hijacked. Perpetrators demand release from Kuwaiti prisons of their "brothers," pro-Iranian terrorists who were convicted of participating in the 1983 attacks on U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait. Kuwait refuses to negotiate. During the 15 day ordeal, two Kuwaiti passengers are murdered before negotiations in Algeria result in release of remaining hostages. The hijackers disappear.

- Khalil al-Wazir, military commander of the PLO (and subordinate overall only to PLO chairman Yasser Arafat) is murdered in his home in Tunisia, reportedly by the MOSSAD, Israel's intelligence agency.

- USS Samuel B. Roberts (FFG-58) is severely damaged by a mine in the Persian Gulf, apparently emplaced by Iran.

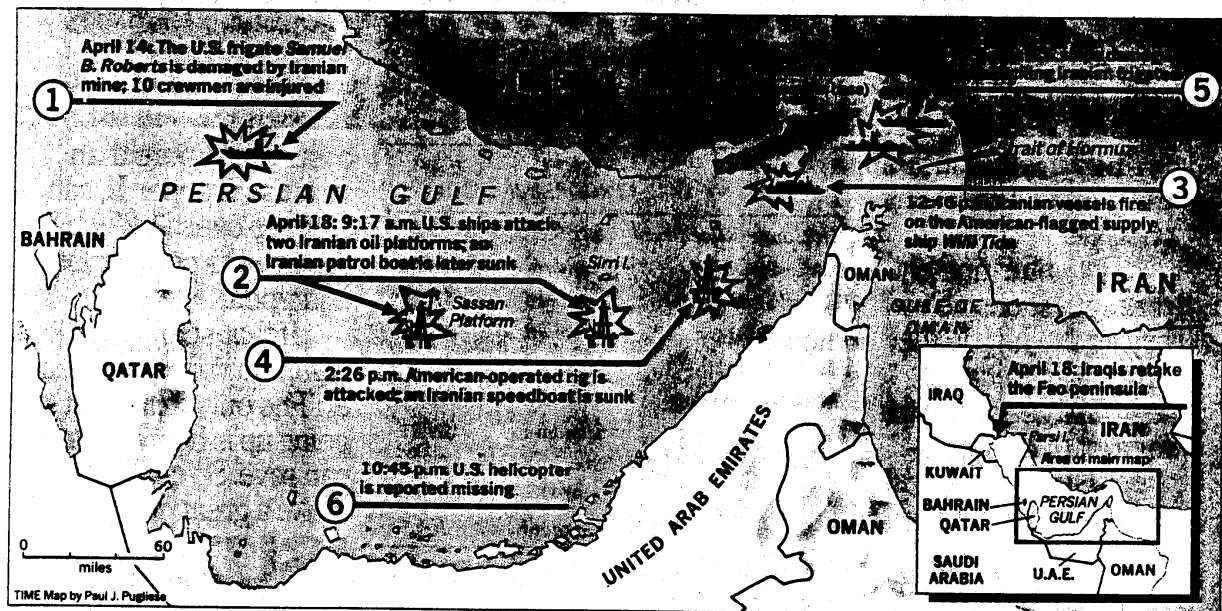
- In a "measured response," U.S. warships destroy two Iranian oil platforms. Subsequent naval engagements

throughout the day result in the destruction or disablement of six Iranian vessels.

- Iraq recaptures Fao peninsula, gateway to the Shatt-al-Arab river and the Iraqi port at Basra, which was captured by Iranian forces in 1986.

- U.S. forces indicate possibility of revised rules of engagement in the Persian Gulf which would allow U.S.

warships to protect vessels of any nation. . .



. . . And the conflict between Iran and Iraq continues.

Experts in all fields have drawn various "lessons learned" from this complex political, ideological, and military environment, and continue to formulate opinions on what really constitutes war in the modern era. In the purely military, and primarily naval, realm, the most recent engagement in which almost half of Iran's at sea capability was destroyed in nine hours has underscored one

most noteworthy, if not gratifying point: high technology weapons and systems do fulfill expectations. While minor by World War II standards, the April 18, 1988 confrontation between U.S. and Iranian forces is the most significant naval engagement since the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines in 1944. It demonstrated that the accuracy and destructive power of today's weapons do justify their expense and complexity.

Coincidentally, Samuel B Roberts, the frigate which hit an apparently Iranian mine triggering the sequence of events leading to the recent fight, was also the name of a destroyer escort which was sunk in the Leyte Gulf. Samuel Roberts himself was an early Pacific theater hero. Ships in those days were built to fight a different kind of naval warfare. They were heavily armored and most equipment was either hydraulically or manually operated. Consequently, those ships could sustain heavy damage from enemy gunfire without being put out of action. Today's ships, on the other hand, are designed primarily as platforms for the delivery of long range missiles, or for anti-submarine warfare, and as a result are crammed with state of the art electronics. These systems, and the people that operate them, are protected by thin alloy hulls, a situation which has often been criticized, particularly in the wake of the sinking of HMS Sheffield in the Falklands and the death of 37 sailors when USS Stark hit a mine in the Persian Gulf. Although such criticisms are unquestionably valid in some senses, they also lead to the necessary recognition of two additional concepts: (1) the object of modern naval warfare is not solely to sink ships, but rather to make a combatant ship noncombatant; destruction of electronic

systems, known as "mission kill" effectively accomplishes this goal without the perhaps unnecessary loss of life (and expenditure of munitions) more likely in an actual sinking. (2) Getting off the first shot is the best tactic. Modern ships do, of course, have defensive systems to protect them, for example, from an incoming missile. Survivability, however, is significantly enhanced by destroying the source of the weapon as opposed to relying on those defensive systems to perform perfectly in the final few seconds before impact.

The difficulty, from the American perspective, arises in an almost inbred fear of unnecessarily creating an international incident. While firing first provides an edge, he who does so must be absolutely sure that his actions are warranted, and must remember the crucial nature of making that first free shot count, because after it's done, look out!

. . . BUT FUNDAMENTALLY NO FOUNDATION FOR NEGOTIATION

In his State of the Union address on January 25, 1988, President Reagan did not mention the Persian Gulf, Iran, Iraq, or even Israel. Perhaps the President and his staff felt that any mention of these would go too far toward conjuring up visions of the "Iran-Contra Affair," and generate negative reactions to an otherwise positive, upbeat address. Perhaps the President purposefully discussed Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Canada, and Mexico as the more critical areas of foreign policy upon which Americans should focus. Perhaps, of simple necessity, he just avoided a



highly controversial range of Mideast issues which have virtually eluded all diplomatic effort. Regardless, the fact remains that the lifeblood of western and far-east society and civilization originates in this region which has been racked by war for eight years and conflict for forty. This is the only area in the world where United States naval warships are involved in operations which demand that they regularly steam at "general quarters," the highest state of readiness, in anticipation of attack. It therefore appears essential that we, the people, and our government as our voice, vigorously seek open-minded appreciation for the roots of conflict between Iran and Iraq, and acquire an understanding of what the mandatory quest for Mideast peace involves.

#### NON-CAUSE CAUSES

If one thing is obvious about Iraq's original 1980 decision to attack, it is timing. The fall in that part of the world is perfect for infantry maneuver, and in late 1980 both superpowers had apparently focused their attention elsewhere - the Soviets on Afghanistan (and Poland), and the United States on the hostage crisis and presidential elections. In Iran, Khomeini's new regime was perceived as faltering: oil revenues were low and inflation was high; there was open rebellion; and, amidst countless executions of pro-shah officers, the military forces that had been built up over the years had collapsed. 1 Khomeini had even found it necessary to create a separate, more trustworthy army, the Revolutionary Guard. And further, Iraq had recently made noteworthy progress in establishing itself as a

leader among Arab states, not only against Israel, but also as an emergent power in the wake of the shah's decline as Gulf policeman.

But why did Iraq attack? What were, and are Saddam Hussein's goals. Did he knowingly risk oil fields, international disapproval, and domestic unrest, and, if so, why? Early in the war, opinions in the United States stressed Iraq's desire to acquire additional oil, export of the Iranian revolution, Soviet expansionism, and Iraqi aspirations to rule the Arab world. Official pronouncements by the warring countries, however, put the heaviest weight on ancient religious and political differences, a centuries-old border dispute, and "U.S.-Zionist manipulation." 2 Indeed, there are many differences between Iran and Iraq to cause a general hostility between them. The Iraqi leaders are Sunnis Arabs, and pan-Arabists, while the Khomeini followers are Shiites, non-Arabs, and pan-Islamists. But today's regimes also share much. Both are republics which came to power through utter repudiation of monarchs; both are non-aligned but have expressed distinctly anti-U.S./imperialist sentiments; both are in some form pro-Palestinian; and both have their own concept of how the Arab, or Muslim world should be ruled - concepts which are pursued through use of the people as a tool, a means of achieving governmental objectives. In attempting to understand why the two countries are fighting, and therefore what might determine prospects for peace, consideration must be given not only to the hostility that culminated in war, but also to their comparable perceptions of what determines an acceptable environment in which to live

peacefully.

Since Iranians impugned Arabized culture fourteen centuries ago, cultural antagonism has existed between Iran and Iraq. To an Iranian, being a Muslim has never meant losing one's identity and becoming an Arab. With the establishment of Shiism as the Iranian national religion in the sixteenth century, the cultural rivalry and national polarization between the Persians and Arabs was sharpened. The existence of Shiite shrines and a Shiite majority in Iraq have historically furthered Iran's interests, and bitterness. In general, the thought, culture, and language of the two peoples evolved along different paths, both with proud tradition. These factors in Iranian and Iraqi thinking and history - their heritage - cannot be changed; a solution to them cannot be found. While they undoubtedly exacerbated relations between the two countries - such notions do appeal to patriotic tendencies - it just does not seem possible that they alone caused Baghdad to attack in September 1980.

In a modern sense, the Sunni-Shiite antagonism, coupled with the particularly Shiite nature of the Khomeini revolution, could lead to the conclusion that Iraq attacked in a preemptory manner to prevent Khomeini from gaining enough power to influence Iraq's primarily Shiite population. In fact, other Arab countries expressed concern in this regard, reflecting a vast Khomeini influence and a definite respect for the subversive potential of fundamentalist, Khomeini-backed Shiite groups. Nevertheless, fear of a widespread Shiite rebellion does not appear to account for Iraq's decision to go to war with Iran. Even if the Iraqi government initially felt that it could topple Khomeini before

the Shiites could respond, it would not have launched its primary attack from the most heavily Shiite region in Iraq, the south, and would not have indiscriminately killed Shiite civilians in Iran. These are not the actions of a government fearful of the enemy's influence over its population. Comparably, if Iran provoked the war, any expectation Khomeini might have had of a spontaneous uprising of Shiites did not materialize in Iraq; nor did an Arabistic uprising in southern Iran where the population is heavily Arab. 3 Again, even the power of Islam was not great enough to overcome the nationalistic drive to fight for one's homeland.

The possibility of outright and subversive Soviet expansionism, ever-so-dominant in U.S. and most western foreign policy, cannot be ruled out in this conflict. The Soviets did provide Iraq with the majority of its weapons, did invade Afghanistan at a time of significantly decreased U.S. influence in the region, and did court Iran's new regime. As the war dragged on, however, it became increasingly apparent that they had no more success than the United States in establishing a truly influential position with either of the warring countries. A December 1986 State Department current policy report offers the following assessments of U.S. and Soviet policy in the region for comparison:

Soviet

"...to establish and broaden its relations and influence with the Gulf states..." and "counter U.S. regional relationships...who are positioning themselves to emerge as the major extraregional power in the post-Persian Gulf war period."

U.S.

"... protect our interests (by) ensuring that (the Persian Gulf) does not come under the domination of a power hostile to the United States, our Western allies, or to our friends in the region. We do not want the Soviet Union either to control directly or increase significantly its presence or influence over the region.

#### THE BORDER

The intractable Shatt-al-Arab boundary question has been a source of conflict for centuries, whether on its own, or entangled with other contentious issues. To Iraq, the geographical reality is that this river is her one viable outlet to the sea and therefore vital to her national security, both politically and economically. The problem is that Iraq has viewed her unrestricted and exclusive sovereignty over it as essential and historically right. When Iraq granted Iran half of the river in 1975 in return for an end to the mighty shah's support for the economically and politically crippling Kurdish civil war, it may have appeared to be a small price to pay. But the leaders of Iraq, and its people, must have felt profoundly humiliated. At a time when the Baathists were attempting to encourage internal accord and a strong Arab-nationalist ideology, albeit with ruthless tactics, this was devastating: they were slapped by superior military might and superpower influence. When Iran's military forces began to decline a few year later, Iraq renounced the 1975 treaty, and a few days before all-out attack, abrogated it, claiming the Shatt as "totally Arab and totally Iraqi." 5

The Shatt is unique in the Middle East. With virtually every other modern boundary drawn by twentieth century colonial administrators, no other border has a record so long and emotional. It has become a source of national pride, as well as vital

interest.<sup>6</sup> While clearly not the only, or even the major viable solution can and must be found before a lasting peace can be achieved. There are northern boundary disputes, but it is the Shatt that is crucial. Even recent efforts to divert oil through pipelines across the desert to the Mediterranean do not reduce substantially the essential nature of addressing this source of ancient hostility.

#### IRAQI ASPIRATIONS

They existed before the war, played an almost unquestionable role in its beginning, continue today, and perhaps should be absolutely no surprise. Iraq's Baath party is "unique among third world states in that it has a foreign policy based on clearly articulated ideological foundations."<sup>7</sup> Though long-treated as incomprehensible by most westerners, the fact is that it is perceived United States imperialism - an apparent policy of extending a nation's authority by territorial acquisition or by the establishment of economic and political control over other nations - which the Baathists believe is in direct confrontation with their ideals. To them, this threat is embodied in and symbolized by Israel. "What we mean by an imperialist country," noted the political report of the Eighth Regional Conference of the party, "is the United States in particular and those countries in cooperation with U.S. policies of aggression." <sup>8</sup> The same report further stated that the Iraqi's "opposition to the imperialist countries does not prevent us from dealing with them in matters which are in our national interest."<sup>9</sup> Similar policies toward the Soviets are recorded.

As the champion of Arab nationalism, the Baathists have

suffered and struggled not only through the humiliating Israeli defeats, but also through continuous internal unrest and even civil war. Domestic economic programs have floundered, and relations with neighboring countries, though improved after initial deterioration, indicate half-hearted support. Efforts to consolidate and retain power remain brutal, with execution and assassination perfectly regular means of eliminating internal adversaries. Reportedly, Saddam Hussein is so paranoid in this regard that he transfers his military officers too frequently for coalitions to form, and so ruthless that he even strangled an opponent with his bare hands.<sup>10</sup>

The Baathists may even have initially viewed the Iranian revolution as yet another imperialist attempt to destabilize Iraq and bring about the downfall of the regime.<sup>11</sup> Regardless, in the wake of the unified Arab rejection of the Camp David accords and the weakening of Iran, Iraq had an opportunity to assert itself as a dominant gulf power which was almost too good to be true. By eliminating the threat to regional governments, Iraq could emerge as a positive contributor to Gulf security and stability. A heightened view of the regime abroad would also engender increased credibility and stability at home. By seizing the Shatt-al-Arab in the process, the Baathists could appeal to a patriotic issue, and guarantee the country's ability to capitalize on the oil profits so necessary to improve the domestic situation. In all the regime would emerge as powerful, ready to proceed in its quest for Arab unity.

As the war progressed to a protracted stalemate, most Arab states began to provide Iraq some assistance. It has become

widely, but quietly accepted that, despite any ill-conceived initial Iraqi aspirations, the Khomeini revolution threatens the regional status quo to such an extent that victory by Iran is in no one's best interest.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, Iraq has long since succeeded in establishing itself as a viable defender of Arab causes, while improving relations with the U.S., and with many neighbors previously considered hostile. On the other hand, Arab states have neither united in any plan to offensively eliminate Iran's government, nor actually supported with armies Iraq's defense. Rather, while applauding Iraq's agreement to a cease fire, they have remained content to let Iraq fight Saddam Hussein's war, taking whatever steps deemed necessary to protect their own interests. Recent newspaper reports indicate that both the Syrians and the Saudis have approached Iran to offer help in negotiating the peace. Perhaps the majority of the Arabs are cautious because, while they want regional peace, they have not forgotten the platform on which the Baathists rose to power. Neither can we.

#### THE REAL FUTURE

Whatever Khomeini's initial intent, he now rejects all peaceful overtures and insists upon the elimination of Saddam Hussein from power as a precondition to negotiation. His views of politics as a struggle between the forces of good and evil, of life as one of either true faith or atheism, and of the future as necessarily a period of reversion, are all highly complicating matters by no means conducive to political compromise, or even cease-fire. So the war goes on, and people die, and the rest of the world provides the weapons and follows the reports in daily



media. Some even say that the continuation of hostilities, at least while the current regimes are in power, is preferable to a negotiated peace which could offer either the opportunity to refocus his radical tendencies, on israel for example. Shouldn't we, at minimum, concentrate on achieving a stronghold of Arab support for Israel's right to exist before worrying about Iran and Iraq? A solution to the Palestinian problem might take some impetus out of the war anyway. And as long as the oil keeps flowing, why not let them destroy each other since, as Henry Kissinger said, "the best news would be if they both lost?"<sup>13</sup>

Unfeeling though Dr. Kissinger's quip may seem in terms of the incalculable devastation and death wrought on both countries by the war, it may be just that perception that Iran and Iraq will continue to face in the foreseeable future. There simply appears to be fundamentally no foundation for negotiation, no envisioned concept of peace which would be politically, economically, and ideologically acceptable to all concerned.

One distinct advantage to writing about this in-progress war, particularly as an amateur, is the opportunity to decide that it would be somewhat presumptuous to offer conclusions, or proposed solutions to problems which have eluded the best of minds. The war between Iran and Iraq does, however, reenforce a couple of broad historical lessons. The first is realistically no more than a reminder of the futility of attempting to resolve political problems by sheer military force. With the Arab-israeli situation, the American experience in Vietnam, and now the Soviet failure in Afghanistan as backdrops, the Iranian-Iraqi war again vividly demonstrates that military conflicts are no

longer viable mechanisms for settling political disputes. Neither power can defeat the other decisively and impose its own terms indefinitely. Even if one country were to achieve a punitive peace on the other, that peace would be fragile and, at best, temporary. It would just be a matter of time before the vanquished state would rise up to rid itself of unwanted domination, and redress its perceived grievances.

Finally, another historical reminder. It was perhaps Lord Palmerston, a former British Foreign Secretary, who first pointed out that nations have no permanent friends, only permanent interests. The history of the Mideast is filled with testimonials to this notion. Today, despite highly touted ideological differences, Israel sells arms to Iran while allegedly supporting an Iraqi pipeline venture (conceivably, all with U. S. support); both warring countries purchase arms from China, the Soviet Union, and France, among others; and the superpowers take whatever steps necessary to protect their interests at all levels. Notably, notwithstanding the current U. S. policy toward Iran and American abhorrence of Ayatollah-backed terrorism, it is secret that a Soviet attack into Iran would most likely result in an immediate change in the alliance structure. We would defend Iran. This is the type of strategic dilemma which shapes the affairs of the entire region.

With all this in mind, and an eye towards a real future, it is perhaps the perspective from which American interests are viewed abroad which should concern us. History has taught the world about colonialism, about submersion. To many, the theoretical American concept of a global alliance based on free trade, comprised of free nations who are mutually cooperative and

allied in defense of their individual freedom, simply may not seem realistic. Perhaps the real challenge is to find a way to convince people that, despite the historical perspective surrounding nations which negotiate from a position of absolute military power, and despite any perceptions our previous actions may have caused, the American goal is truly to seek an environment in which all can live and let live, in peace and free.

#### NOTES

I feel obligated to point out that after completing the reading associated with a project of this nature, one naturally begins to accept certain thoughts, concepts, and opinions of other more learned scholars. This is a research paper, and while every effort has been made to use a footnote in each appropriate case, some phrases and ideas, often repeated by various authors, may be included without footnote, despite not being original thought. Further, in all cases where a "private conversation," or "personal source" is noted, I gave my word that individuals, or organizations would not be named. They are all highly credible.

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## CHAPTER TWO

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#### MAPS

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|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Persian Gulf Region    | - | U. S. State Department         |
| The Expansion of Islam | - | Wallbank, Western Perspectives |

Southwest Asia	-	U. S. State Department
Israeli Territory	-	World Book Encyclopedia
Gulf of Aqaba	-	U. S. State Department
Gulf of Facilities	-	U. S. State Department
Troop Positions	-	Tahir-Kheli, Iran-Iraq War
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